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O'Reilly, Bernard
Heroic women in the Bible
and the Church.

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HEROIC WOMEN

OF

THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH:

NARRATIVE BIOGRAPHIES OF GRAND FEMALE CHARACTERS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS, AND OF SAINTLY WOMEN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, BOTH IN EARLIER AND LATER AGES.

Senior Novitiate

BY THE

REV. BERNARD O'REILLY.

Illustrated

WITH TWENTY-FIVE PLATES IN OIL COLORS, AFTER PAINTINGS BY RAPHAEL, DOMENICHINO, ALLORI, MERLE, LANDELLE, BOULANGER, PORTAELS, KOEHLER, BROCHART, DEVEDEUX, VERNET-LECOMTE, AND OTHERS, EXECUTED BY THE BEST GERMAN AND FRENCH ART-PRINTERS.

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Author's Preface.

THE publishers have spared neither labor nor expense to make this book most beautiful in form; with what degree of success, the reader is now enabled to judge. It remains for the author to say briefly what subject-matter he has prepared for such exquisite setting.

From the earliest Christian ages it has been a labor of love with writers, painters, and sculptors, to embody in their artistic conceptions the most prominent personages of the Bible, and the great events of Sacred History in which they acted a part. In these early delineations, however, sculptor and painter labored under sad disadvantages; for they had fallen on a period of decadence, and the religion they wished to glorify dared not for centuries to leave the silence of the desert or the darkness of the catacombs. But the writers in the Grecian world at least — like Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, and John Chrysostom — inherited the intellectual culture and refined taste of the best days of Athens. Hence, while the first Christian temples offered but the rudest artistic representations, the works of the oldest Christian writers — the "Fathers of the Church," as they are universally called — are of finished excellence, and have never been surpassed.

Since the age of Constantine, the aim of Christian art has been the same, though its efforts have been attended by a success varying with the circumstances of time and country. Thus in all the monumental churches of Christendom, the stained glass of the windows, the mosaics and frescoes that covered the wall-spaces inside or outside, and the world of sculpture that

peopled the magnificent porches, had but one purpose, — to place before the popular eye the whole history of Revealed Religion, God's dealings with man, the origin and destiny of our race, all centering in the great fact of the Incarnation.

In truth, whether the traveler stands entranced before the west fronts of Amiens, Rheims, or Bourges, or the glorious south and north porches of Chartres, or the splendors of St. Mark's at Venice, or the shining basilicas of Orvieto and Assisi, it is the same sublime theme that commands his attention in every one of these great epics in stone. Each temple is "the Book of the Lamb, written within and without." These stupendous structures, brought to completion by the generosity and joint labor of centuries, are so many Bibles ever open to the people, keeping fresh in their minds the whole cycle of Divine truths, from the creation of the world to the final judgment.

To the personages and events of Sacred History were added by the artist the local history of each church, — the main incidents connected with the lives of its first apostle and chief teachers. Thereby the people, as they were about to enter the temple, could read these detached pages of Revelation, as illustrated around and above them in forms of striking grandeur and beauty; while within the holy place the voice of their pastors explained the Divine Book that contained the connected whole. Thus the personages of the Old and New Testaments, as well as those who had been instrumental in each land in propagating and maintaining the Faith, have never ceased to be cherished names in the Christian household.

The following pages touch upon only a portion — albeit a chief portion — of this mighty history. The title itself — "Heroic Women of the Bible and the Church" — prepares the reader to find a selection of illustrious women who have had a providential mission to fulfill at certain important epochs before and after the coming of Christ. Among these are a few, — the Witch of Endor, Jezabel, and Athalia, — not held up to our admiration as heroines, but depicted as a warning, and because their dark deeds afforded occasion to God's faithful servants for the practice of shining virtues.

Should the welcome accorded to this book be such as to encourage the writer to publish "Heroes of the Bible and the Church," then indeed might he satisfy the yearnings of his own heart, and fulfill the wishes of the Christian reader, by completing in narrative form the grand outline of Sacred History, both as set forth in God's revealed Word, and as illustrated in the lives of some of the most heroic of his servants during the Christian era. Meanwhile let the author cherish the hope that every family into which his book is admitted shall find in it nothing that is not suggestive of lofty aims and generous sentiments.

It is said, that, when Michael Angelo had completed in the Sixtine Chapel the series of frescoes that embodied the history of the Old Testament, the Pope found the composition lacking in color and splendor. Indeed, the artist, while departing altogether from the pure and heavenly spirituality of Fra Angelico and Fra Bartolomeo, and giving to his forms the gigantic grandeur befitting the old Pagan deities, had also shown a thorough contempt for adventitious ornament. Previous artists in their wall-paintings had employed a gold ground, and arrayed their personages in gorgeous vesture. Hence old Julius II., while admiring the work and praising the great workman, was wont to repeat, "Let the chapel be enriched with color and gold; for it is rather dull as it is." Michael Angelo was content to reply, "The personages painted above there did not wear cloth of gold in their lifetime; they were not wealthy people, but holy men and women, who held gold and fine raiment of little account." It would appear, however, that the illustrious painter did comply in some measure with the desire of the Pope.

Conscious of the imperfections of his work, and fully alive to the moral greatness of the heroines he has attempted to portray, the writer can at least assure his readers of one thing, — that it has been his sole aim, from first to last, to lift their minds and hearts toward Him who is the essential Truth and uncreated Beauty. Would that these portraits of heroic women may be found so far true to the inspired originals that all thought of ornament shall be forgotten in contemplating them! Let each

heroic figure, from Eve down to her who "stood near the Cross," only help to fix our minds on the true Adam, the Incarnate Son; and let all the saintly persons whose lives are set forth here, from Mary herself to the angelic women of this our New World, only lead us back to the Crucified; and our labor shall not have been in vain. At any rate, in perusing these portraitures, it will be seen, in every instance, that the supernatural grace which elevates and transforms these great souls destroys and hinders in them the growth and perfection of none of the sweet natural graces and virtues that ever make, of the holiest, the loveliest.

Should the perusal contribute to bring the reader nearer to Him, who is at once Creator, Redeemer, and Judge of us all, the author will be more than content to leave it to His infinite mercy to remember only the wish so ardently cherished, of glorifying in aught His Holy Name.

BERNARD O'REILLY.

NEW YORK, January, 1877.

Introduction.

Eve, the Mother of all the Living.

THE first chapters of Genesis, like the ocean, have been sounded and searched from the time of Moses, by the most serious seekers after truth, as well as by shallow and reckless adventurers. The Hebrew Talmudists, the fathers of the early Christian Church, and the leading minds of modern ages, have alike been persistent in their endeavors to wrest from these awful Scripture depths the mighty secrets with which they are pregnant. Nor has the result, so far, been unsatisfactory to the most enlightened scholar or the most devout believer.

Just as every minute fragment of infusorial shell, brought up from the sea-bottom by the patient hand of the investigator, serves to connect the life with which the waters are teeming in our day with the life that filled them in the remotest periods known to science; just as the ooze adhering to the sounding-rod helps the geologist to ascertain the material forming the present ocean-beds, and to predict therefrom of what strata future continents may be composed: even so do the successive, thorough, and reverent investigations of inspired history reward the labor of the student. The true origin of things becomes more certain in the light of God's word, the first stages of life on our globe are laid bare, and the Almighty hand is discovered laying the foundations of the world, and directing its moral destinies with a perfect unity of purpose through all ages known to man.

The very first pages of that book, dear alike to the Hebrew and the Christian, to the Synagogue and the Church, describe the privileged condition of her who was "the mother of all the living." An imperfect knowledge of her history, or the erroneous notions of early education, leave on many minds the impres-

sion that Eve's agency in the fall canceled all her claims to our filial regard, and left room only for just resentment. But a more careful study, and a fuller acquaintance with the sentiments of the Church, fill us with tender sympathy and veneration for our first mother.

Fairest of all God's works, created last of all, and within the earthly paradise, and amid a mystery fraught with most precious instruction, she was not only endowed with every natural perfection suitable to her quality of parent and queen of all humanity, but was, like Adam himself, exalted to the rank of adopted child of God.

This expression amazes: its sound conveys to the mind the idea of a dignity and a glory so far above the level of human thought and aspiration as to be unreal and delusive. Yet this reality is first and last and middlemost in the divine economy.

The fall of our first parents is a familiar dogmatic fact in every Christian household. But how can we understand the fall, unless we have measured the height from which they fell?

While we are studying the personal history of our first mother on this mountain of paradise, we are gathering light and strength for a further ascension: presently, from beneath the fatal tree on the top, where we shall bid farewell to Eve, we shall descry another mountain-top far away, on which stands another Eve, beneath another and a more memorable tree.

What, then, is meant by this doctrine of the divine adoption? Simply this: that God was not satisfied, when he called man into being, with bestowing on him all the perfections and graces which we conceive as belonging to his nature and adorning it, with subjecting to this superior being all the brute creation, and assigning to him a sphere of moral duty based on the essential laws of his nature, and to be rewarded by an immortality of real though merely natural felicity hereafter.

He raised man — man perfect in mind and body — to his own level; proclaimed him before the entire host of heaven as his adopted child, truly and really as such; imposed on him, in this elevation, the law of higher aims in his actions, of divine generosity in sentiments, of godlike virtues in his relations with his fellow-

men; and assigned to him as his final destiny the clear, unclouded vision of his own being, a share in his own interior life, and eternal fellowship with the three infinite Persons into which the unity of the divine nature overflows.

The grace of exaltation means not only the bestowal of a divine rank, with its rapturous hopes and eternal prospects: it means, that, with the gift of supernatural justice and holiness, God communicated his own Spirit to be in intimate and perpetual relation with the soul, and, by dwelling in it, to be the very principle of its godly life. With this indwelling of the Spirit came to the soul a flood of gifts and energies that it is well to appreciate, if we would have a true insight into the very constitutive elements of the supernatural order as it existed in the beginning, and was restored in Christ.

The "Spirit Creator," then, which was communicated to the soul in the divine adoption, not only raised it to that nearness to God, and familiar intercourse with him, but imparted to every one of its vital forces a new and extraordinary power. The mind of man was filled with the gift of wisdom, which enabled him to read God in all his works, and to behold the unseen and the eternal behind the thin veil of the visible and the temporal. He "filled them with the knowledge of understanding. He created them in the science of the spirit. He filled their hearts with wisdom. . . . He set his eye upon their hearts, to show them the greatness of his works" (Ecclus. xvii. 5–7). In natural and supernatural knowledge, as well as in the power to do easily all godlike deeds, the Creator spared them the slow processes of acquisition. They were enabled both to know and to do, from the first hour of their creation, what is only the result of long striving in the ordinary course of life. They received what theologians call the "infused habits" of all intellectual and moral virtues, with the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost.

The mother or maiden who reads this page may apprehend its meaning, if she will recall to mind how long it takes to acquire any accomplishment, or the habit of practicing with facility any one needful virtue. What labor and perseverance it takes to sing or play at sight the most difficult music, to manage the

painter's brush, the sculptor's chisel, the harp or the organ, so as to make the use a pleasure, and not a labor! These are examples of acquired habits. Then, again, in pursuits that belong more to the pure intellect, what years of patient training are necessary, even in those who are the best endowed by Nature, to master with almost instinctive ease the most abstruse problems of science, or to see with the glance of intuition what untrained talent can only discern after diligent and patient research! Now, God can bestow at once on any or every faculty of the soul the power which is only acquired by protracted labor; and this power is termed an "infused habit," because it is a vital force imparted instantaneously by the Creator, enabling one to accomplish with instinctive and unconscious facility what could, in the ordinary course, be done only after long habitual effort.

Thus holy persons are said to be "led by the Spirit of God," because, without having learned, they seem to know intuitively things far above the reach of human ken. St. Ignatius Loyola is thus said to have declared, that although but a rude, unlettered soldier, he had learned more by one hour of prayer in the Cave of Manresa than all the doctors of the schools could have taught him in a lifetime (Hare, "Wanderings in Spain," pp. 26, 27). And thus we meet frequently with persons of no education whatever, but of eminent humility and piety, who have acquired, by communing with God in prayer, a deep knowledge of divine things, an unearthly wisdom, and a preternatural facility of practicing the most sublime virtues. Their souls are obedient to the light of the indwelling Spirit, and follow his impulses whithersoever he would lead them.

So was it with newly created man. God, in adopting him, had done for him what no human parent can do for the child of his adoption, — infused into his soul his own sanctifying Spirit. With this original justice and holiness were united, as integral parts of a supernatural state, and appendages of a godlike condition, the perfect subordination of the inferior or sensitive faculties of the soul to the reason and the will, and, in the body, the subjection of sensuality to the control of the spirit. No revolt of the senses, such as we have to blush for in our fallen state, could ever occur

in the human frame, so long as man remained obedient and faithful to his bountiful Maker. Besides, the same special care of the God to whom he was ever so near, preserved that frame from pain or decay, or the infirmity of age. It was in man's power never to die, and to pass from the bliss of his state of trial to the incomprehensible ecstasy of the beatific vision without the bitterness of death.

"God created man incorruptible; and to the image of his own likeness he made him: but, by the envy of the devil, death came into the world" (Wisdom of Solomon ii. 23, 24).

But we must not anticipate. The Eternal One, then, to whom a thousand years or a thousand centuries are but "as yesterday which is past, and as a watch in the night," had been for cycles of uncounted ages preparing our earth as a dwelling-place for this new king, whose noble nature placed him a little beneath the angels, but whose exaltation to a supernatural destiny made him their equal, and the envy of some among them. The inspired writer relates how man, soon after his creation, was transferred to a choice abode, a paradise, or garden of delights, which was to be, in the divine plan, the cradle and nursery of the race in its innocence, so long as its period of probation lasted. This abode he had to guard and cultivate. All that it contained was assigned to his use, save one tree and its fruit. This was forbidden him; and the prohibition was to test his obedience toward his bountiful Provider, Maker, and Parent. It was designated as "the tree of knowledge of good and evil;" not that the natural taste of its fruit could perfect the intellect, or bestow superior knowledge, but that the sinful use thereof would be followed by a sense of guilt so bitter and so keen as to open the eyes of the transgressor to the difference between lost innocence and nearness to God, and the degradation entailed by sin, and the separation from the source of all good.

"As God had built the world for man" (says Lactantius), "so did he make man for himself, that he might be the high priest of this divine temple, the attentive beholder of his works here below, as well as of the heavens above him. He alone is gifted with sense and reason, enabling him to understand God, to admire his

works, and clearly discern the greatness of his power. Wherefore he alone was endowed with a reasoning mind, and with a tongue capable of expressing its every thought, that he might thus proclaim the divine Majesty." Scarcely, however, has he been placed over his blissful abode, when we hear his Creator say, "It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself." Follows a passage full of deepest significance. He who had bestowed on man as the noblest attribute of his nature, even in its elevation to a divine rank, free-will, manifests his wish that man should freely love, and freely take to himself, the helpmate about to be provided for him. Then the Author of life brought in succession to Adam "all the beasts of the earth, and all the fowls of the air," in pairs, "male and female" as he had made them. "And Adam called all the beasts by their names, and all the fowls of the air, and all the cattle of the field; but for Adam there was not found a helper like himself."

One may, without doing violence to the context, infer that a sense of loneliness here stole over our great ancestor, coupled with a longing for a companion in whose society he should find the highest complement of earthly bliss. Did he express a wish or prayer to this effect to the Searcher of hearts, who beheld his disappointment, and read his secret thought? We know not. But next followed the mysterious "deep sleep" cast upon Adam, and the formation from out the substance of his side, and nearest to his heart, of the masterpiece which constituted God's only work in the earthly paradise, — the first woman, the mother of us all, EVE.

We are literally walking here upon abysses of truth deeper than those of the Atlantic or Pacific. St. Thomas Aquinas will have it, that it was due to the dignity of our great first parent, that his companion, and the mother of the race, should spring from his own substance, in order that, by being thus the principle and well-spring of human life, he might be more like to God, who is the principle of all created things. Moreover, this unity of substance would be for Adam a powerful incentive toward loving with undivided love her who was a part of himself. There is a divine lesson, too, in the fact that "but one woman was created

for the first man: the whole race has thence to learn that the happiness of parents, the union and honor of families, the proper education of children, the peace of the domestic hearth, and the well-being of public society, were all to rest on conjugal unity. Cornelius à Lapide gives a further reason. As in the unfathomable mystery of God's own interior life, we know that the Father brings forth eternally the Son as a most perfect image of himself, and from them both proceed the Holy Spirit, the living love of the Trinity, so did he, in the beginning of human history, produce Adam like a loved son, and from Adam formed Eve as the substantial love of our first parent.

There is a memorable passage in Tertullian, in which he compares God, while forming the body of Adam, to a sculptor lovingly fashioning in clay the model of a masterpiece on which he has set his heart. So God, as he shapes every line of beauty in the first human frame, contemplates the body of the second Adam, Christ, which is one day to be the price of our ransom on the cross. And to Tertullian's thought this much may be added, — that the divine Workman, as he moulded from out Adam's side the companion whose need his heart so deeply feels, looked forward to that other Adam, whose body, in his own good time, he was to fashion from out the virginal substance of Mary, and to that other moment when that blessed Mary's body should itself be formed with a beginning as privileged, and free from stain, as the origin of the first Eve. For is not the second Eve to be the mother of the true life, and a "helper" to her Son from the manger to the cross?

When Adam appeared as the last of the works of God, St. Clement says, that the beauteous world received its most beauteous ornament in him who was κόσμου κόσμος. What must have been Adam's rapture after his late loneliness, and when, waking from his sleep, he saw by his side, presented by God's own hand, the fulfillment of all his desires, — that lovely being surrounded with the halo of her innocence, and whose beauty outshone what was most fair even in paradise!

"And Adam said, This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out

of Man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be two in one flesh" (that is, the two thus united shall thenceforth be as one substance, one heart, one love, one life, one undivided existence). The last verse is attributed by Christ (Matt. xix. 5) to God himself, who, it is generally understood, placed the words on the lips of Adam as a prophetical utterance, and a divine ordinance regarding the unity and sanctity of matrimony.

Thus we are contemplating at the very cradle of humanity the two first sovereigns, divinely appointed, of the whole earth; while the immediate presence of the Creator makes the spot on which we stand in spirit the holiest of sanctuaries.

Eve, in every natural and supernatural excellence, was her companion's equal. Of the knowledge, not acquired by toil and experience, but poured into his soul from the fountain-head of truth, Adam had previously given a sample in naming appropriately every inhabitant of earth and air collected around him by the Creator. This same knowledge was communicated to Eve. She was destined to be, with her husband, the teacher of the entire human family, and their teacher in things divine, as in inferior matters. To them God revealed — such is the common opinion — the principal mysteries relating to his own nature. Like the angels, our first parents during their period of trial had to practice the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. They had to believe in what they saw not, and could not understand; to hope for the sure attainment of that other life, where clear vision would be the reward of faith, and sure possession the crown of hope; and they were to love, with a love setting on its divine object a price beyond and above all finite good, that Infinite Perfection and Loveliness, whose bosom was one day to be their eternal home. In that love was to be blended as an integral part the strong love for their offspring, down to the latest-born, with all the sweet and ever active charities that make society on earth the image and foretaste of the society of the blessed.

To these exalted beings, God had appointed guardian spirits from among his own faithful hosts; and this was meet. For, in fulfilling their ministry toward man, angels were serving the

adopted children of their common Maker and Lord; and, moreover, in them they ministered, in anticipation, to Christ and Christ's spouse, the Church. The angels witnessed the blessing bestowed so solemnly on the pair, the injunction to taste not of the forbidden tree, and the dread penalty that should follow the transgression. But there were fallen angels too, enemies of God and man.

Not unworthy of a great Christian poet is the parting admonition of the archangel to our favored first parent: —

> "Be strong, live happy, and love! But, first of all,
> Him, whom to love is to obey, and keep
> His great command. Take heed lest passion sway
> Thy judgment to do aught, which else free-will
> Would not admit: thine, and of all thy sons,
> The weal or woe in thee is placed: beware!
> I in thy persevering shall rejoice,
> And all the bless'd. Stand fast: to stand or fall,
> Free in thine own arbitrament it lies.
> Perfect within, no outward aid require;
> And all temptation to transgress repel."

Adam, thus warned by the heavenly messenger, repeats the warning to Eve, when she is impelled to wander from his side, and to brave the foe whom she knows to be lying in wait for their destruction: —

> "O woman! best are all things as the will
> Of God ordain'd them: his creating hand
> Nothing imperfect or deficient left
> Of all that he created, much less man,
> Or aught that might his happy state secure,
> Secure from outward force. Within himself
> The danger lies, yet lies within his power:
> Against his will he can receive no harm.
> But God left free the will; for what obeys
> Reason is free; and Reason he made right,
> But bid her well beware, and still erect;
> Lest by some fair-appearing good surprised,
> She dictate false, and misinform the will
> To do what God expressly hath forbid.
> . . . . . .

Seek not temptation then, which to avoid
Were better, and most likely if from me
Thou sever not: trial will come unsought."

That Eve did "seek temptation" is clear enough from the sacred text; nor in the means taken by the Tempter to work the downfall of man through woman does the great poet depart widely from the narrative of Moses, or from the most approved interpreters.

"Now the serpent was more subtle (cunning) than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made." By a mysterious permission, frequently instanced in Holy Writ, Lucifer, as well as his fallen angels, has the power of taking possession of the bodies of animals, and even of man, and of using the organs thus usurped for his own purposes.

The Arch-fiend assumes the serpent's form, and, after long watch, finds Eve gazing curiously at the fair tree, and the tempting fruit that she may not taste. It is a weakness of which her foe takes instant advantage. The Hebrew and Chaldæan texts make him say, "Is it indeed true (*aph ki*) that God hath given you command that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?" He does not, as in the Vulgate, ask *why* God has done so; but proceeding more cautiously, and without abruptly questioning the right of God to impose the prohibition on his creatures, he seems to inquire about the mere existence of the prohibition. Eve, already warned, should have now been doubly so, on hearing an animal use articulate speech. Curiosity, which has led her into a first imprudence, causes her to fall into a worse. She answers, that God has indeed imposed one limitation on the use granted to herself and her husband of all the fruits in paradise. She even exaggerates the terms of the command, by adding, that they were not so much as to "touch" the tree, whereas they were only forbidden to "eat" of it; and she seems to throw in a doubt about the certain death threatened as a penalty, "lest, perhaps, we die."

The rest is soon told. But pause we for a moment beneath the shade of that goodly tree; and, at the feet of her who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, let us to reflect on the

single command imposed on our favored parents: it is one of *abstinence.* And abstinence — to refuse eye and ear and taste and hand what appetite craves — is still the law of life for the nations. It is by ministering to sensuality that the Devil reigns over the bodies and souls of men. Attend well to the way in which he approaches the soul. A question is always the warning hiss of the serpent: "Is it indeed true that God forbids?" Or "*Why* hath God commanded?" The soul that once deliberately repeats to herself that question, or allows herself to doubt the expediency, the justice, or the necessity of the prohibition, is already lost. Doubt opens the door of the house to evil: vanity, appetite, ambition, rush in, and overpower the will already turned away from God.

"No, you shall not die the death," the Tempter replies. "For God doth know, that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened; and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." It is both the law and the Lawgiver that are now arraigned and made odious. "And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold; and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband, who did eat." The threatened death did not instantly visit the transgressor; and she is thereby emboldened to bear the fatal fruit to Adam. The Hebrew, Chaldee, and Septuagint indicate that Eve ate again with her husband, as if to encourage him to fear no punishment.

His act consummated this primal offense. He was the head of the race: from him was derived all human flesh and blood, since from his substance Eve herself was formed. In him, then, at the moment that he sinned, we were all included. Had he stood faithful to his Maker in the lofty rank to which he had been raised, we should have all stood in him: when he fell, in him all humanity fell. The stream of human life, thus stained with guilt in its very fountain-head and origin, must continue to flow polluted down the ages, till one sprung from Adam, but greater than he, shall, by the application of his own blood, enable every descendant of Adam to be born anew, and this time of the blood of a God.

So, then, most true are the words of Ecclesiasticus (xxv. 33): "From the woman came the beginning of sin, and by her we all die." The "beginning" was indeed from her; but the consummation was from her husband: "By one man sin entered into this world," "in whom all have sinned." Hence, too, "one man" had to die, that all might live.

This offense, this fall, and the moral ruin it entailed upon the race, do not constitute a mystery so inscrutable, but that our reason, aided by the light of faith, can perceive how just are the consequence and the penalty attending on the transgression.

Adam (and in him the whole race) forfeited his supernatural rank, with all its privileges, and its right to a supernatural heaven, to the eternal society of God and his angels. He also lost the priceless ornaments of supernatural virtue that graced every faculty of his soul, as well as the extraordinary exemptions from sensuality, disease, and suffering attached to his sinless condition. Nature, though suddenly and rudely precipitated from her sublime and blissful elevation, was neither destroyed, nor deprived of any of her essentials. In the sudden revolution that took place in man's condition, Nature was wounded and weakened by being suddenly stripped of the divine ornaments of grace; but she remained Nature none the less, and in possession both of her native powers and of the free-will that regulates their exercise.

When the husbandman in Lombardy weds the vine to the elm, the two become so closely united, that they seem one body, enjoying one common life; the tree sustaining its weaker companion, and the vine gracing with its festoons and rich clusters of delicious fruits the majestic trunk and wide-spreading branches that support it. Let some enemy come, and kill the vine, or tear it down from trunk and branch: the elm will lose an ornament, and its members may be lacerated by the violent separation; but it will still remain a lordly tree, with its own distinct life and unimpeded vital currents flowing from the trunk to the extremities of its pendent spray.

Fallen from a height which was not due to his natural merits, or along whose level nature could not have traveled unaided,

man, though sorely bruised, wounded, and weakened, and placed, moreover, beneath the providence of a justly offended God, did not lose the fatherly care of that God. He who had made Adam knew of what dust he had formed him, knew that he had been seduced into evil by the envy of Heaven's great foe, and that his judgment, by "fair-appearing good surprised," and his unwise affection for his companion, had conspired in him to

> "Misinform the will
> To do what God expressly had forbid."

He owed it to himself, if not to the fragility of the work of his hands, that the magnificent design of man's creation and elevation should not be entirely marred by the malice of the rebellious archangel. The divine wrath will have its day; but man shall yet be saved; and mercy's reign, foreshadowed in paradise, shall begin on Calvary, and last for ever.

The Judge has summoned the guilty ones from the covert whither shame had driven them.

> "He came, and with him Eve, more loath, though first
> To offend; discountenanced both, and discomposed:
> Love was not in their looks, either to God,
> Or to each other, but apparent guilt
> And shame, and perturbation and despair,
> Anger and obstinacy, and hate and guile."

What a picture is here of the working of sin in the noblest natures! And how truly every word applies to the soul conscious of the abuse of high gifts, and the loss of irrecoverable innocence! But how specially true of two souls bound to aid each other in striving after loftiest aims, — the attainment of highest moral perfection, — and ruined both by criminal complacency and forgetfulness of the divine judgment!

Pass we rapidly over the ensuing scene of mutual recrimination in that dread Presence, and at the very moment when sincere self-humiliation, candid confession of guilt, and heartfelt appeal to the supreme Mercy, could alone have pleaded in abatement of the coming sentence.

No word of malediction falls from the Father's lips upon either

culprit. Adam stands there but to foreshadow Him who is to expiate all upon "the accursed tree;" and Eve, disobedient, only recalls to the divine Mind that mother, all humility and obedience, destined to stand beneath that bitter tree, and receive from it on her bosom the "fruit of life," and there treasure it for the healing of us all.

The serpent is accursed, or, rather, the old curse pronounced in heaven on the Arch-rebel, the ancient liar, and slayer of souls, is renewed on him who lurks beneath the serpent's form, with the addition that he, proud spirit as he is, must continue to dwell within that beastly thing, crawling along the earth, and feeding upon its inanimate clay, till death releases the animal from thralldom to the fiend.

But there is a still heavier punishment reserved for the Evil One, who had triumphed in the thought of frustrating the divine plan through the fall of Eve and her husband. There, on the very spot where God holds his first court of justice on earth, the Seducer is forced to listen to the earliest recorded prophecy of a Redeemer and Restorer: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she (or *it* or *he*) shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."

Between evil on the one side, impersonated in the serpent (with all who, down to the final judgment-day, will continue the Devil's work), and on the other this woman, who brought death into the world, and her daughter Mary, the mother of the true life, and their great Son Jesus, through whom both Eve and Mary shall crush the serpent's head, there is to be undying hostility. The triumph of evil will be arrested on the cross by "the Blessed Seed;" and a new order of things, a new kingdom of God, will be there inaugurated. But the serpent will lie in wait for the woman's heel. Woman's share in expiation of past guilt, or in co-operation with God in overthrowing the designs and works of the Evil One, can only be at the price of being stricken in her weakest part, — in her heart's dearest affection. She shall suffer in her best beloved. Eve, within a few years, shall behold her eldest-born slay his brother at the altar on which is offered up a spotless lamb, — the figure of Him who is, there-

fore, called "the Lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world" (Apoc. xiii. 8). And from the foot of that altar, where the blood of the victim is mingled with that of the priest, an uninterrupted track of blood (that of beasts offered up in place of guilty man, and that of innocent and holy men immolated by the wicked in hatred of God) marks the pathway of humanity through the ages, down to that altar-tree of Calvary, where the woman "blessed among women" stands, mingling her tears with the blood of her Son, "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world."

Of these two great mothers of the human family, and of all who are to share with them in the labor of reparation, and of building up the kingdom of God in men's souls, one law is to be predicated, — abstinence, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice.

This, in some one degree or another, was to govern the future life of Eve during the long centuries of her exile, as well as the life of every one of the line of true women, whose names stand like beacon-lights in revealed history, till the apparently withered stem of Jesse and David blossomed, and bore MARY.

Our first mother had found it hard to refuse her appetite the taste of the one forbidden fruit amid the boundless store provided for her by the Almighty hand. During the seven or eight hundred years that she is to witness on earth the good and evil deeds of her progeny, one lesson she must inculcate on every child of hers, — that moral strength consists in tasting not, touching not, where to touch is to defile, or to taste is death; and that true heroism consists more in suffering evil than in doing good; true merit in sacrificing one's own darling inclinations more than in offering up choicest victims; and the highest moral perfection in seeking God's interest by benefiting human souls. If the true woman who reads this page will compare Eve's single recorded fault with her long centuries of magnanimous suffering, and persevering endeavor to repair the evil she had done, the comparison may lead her to pity, rather than blame, to admire where many have despised, and to find in the after-life of our common parent many heroic qualities well worthy of the imitation even of her Christian daughters.

Heroines of Patriarchal Days.

Heroines of Patriarchal Days.

Sara, the Princess.
Agar, the Bondwoman.
Rebecca, the Bride.
Rachel and Lia.

I.

Sara the Princess.

AVERY ancient tradition, mentioned by Josephus ("Antiquities of the Jews," bk. I. chap. iii.), is to the effect that Adam, filled with a prophetic knowledge of the future history of mankind, foretold that they should be swept from the earth by fire and flood. This was when wickedness spread over the earth with the descendants of Cain; but the posterity of Seth deserved to be called "the sons of God," on account of their public and solemn worship of the Creator. They added to the solid virtues of practical piety the culture of the arts and sciences, and were the first to note the revolutions of the heavenly bodies.

Lest these first fair fruits of true civilization should utterly perish in the coming catastrophe, they erected two monumental pillars, — one of brick, and the other of stone, — on which they inscribed a summary of their own knowledge and discoveries. Josephus affirms that in his day one of these monuments was still extant in "the land of Syriad." (Assyria?) Will it be given to the indefatigable scientists of the nineteenth century to discover these monumental stones or bricks, and decipher their inscriptions, just as they are, from day to day, digging up from the plains of Assyria, as from the graves of the earliest empires known to man, tablets giving a history of the deluge, and written (not improbably) long before Moses was born? It is impossible to foresee what new voices may hourly be heard from the buried past, confirming our belief in the divine book.

Be that as it may, there is one providential miracle wit-

nessed daily by every man, woman, and child in every Christian land, and to which mothers would do well to point the attention of their dear ones. It is the survival of the Hebrew race in our midst, as distinct and well defined to the mind's eye among surrounding nations and races, as the towering crests of the western mountains stand out at sunset clearly cut, and illumined with golden splendors, against the darkening sky of evening. Only think of it! Since the day when men contemporary with "the mighty hunter" Nimrod stamped on tablets of Assyrian brick the story of the flood so unexpectedly brought to light, and just interpreted to us by the ripest science of Christendom, — only think how revolution after revolution, more destructive than flood or flame, has swept over these Mesopotamian plains, and over every spot of earth where the wandering children of Abraham and Sara have planted their tents, blotting out utterly from the face of the earth the conquering races of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and Rome, and leaving one ever-living, ever-present monument behind, on which the whole earth must gaze with an awe mixed with veneration and pity, — the *Hebrew race.*

It is with such memories that we approach the history of Sara, the mother of God's chosen people, — chosen herself, together with her husband, for sacrifices and sufferings well calculated to try the temper of the most heroic souls.

She was called at first Sarai (the Contentious), and was the sixth in descent from Heber, the great-grandson of Noe. Abram, however, and his wife, when they had passed, at God's call, from their native Chaldæa to the west of the Euphrates, were designated *Ibrim*, or immigrants from "beyond" (*eber*) "the great river."

According to some chronologists, Noe lived for sixty-two years after the birth of Abraham, and fifty-two after that of his niece, or half-sister, Sarai. If Noe's wife (Noria, as she is called in some traditions, or Noema in others) lived as long as her husband, it might, in this case, have been the privilege of both these ancestors of Israel to have dwelt for half a century with the venerable pair from whose loins sprung the renewed human family. Thus

we may, without violating historical probability, contemplate Noria (or Noema) as holding on her knees the child Sarai, and pouring into her ear in girlhood and early womanhood the story of her own long existence, of gigantic crimes against Heaven which she had seen visited with such overwhelming retribution, and of the solitary example of godlike piety in her own companion, rewarded by the divine friendship, and the experience of so merciful a Providence. The Almighty hand, so terrible in destroying the guilty and unrepentant, had been all fatherly tenderness and protection to them and theirs. And with this tale of a world destroyed to punish sin would be told that other no less truthful one of the first creation, coming directly from our first parents through Mathusala, who had lived hundreds of years with these on the one hand, and then with Noe and his wife on the other. With the still nearer example of the unteachable pride exhibited at Babel, and of the chastisement that overtook the builders, Sara must have been made familiar from the cradle, by every person and object around her. Babel, or Bab-Ilu, "the gate of the god Ilu," was very near to, if not identical with, Borsippa, "the tower of tongues," or "the tower of the dispersion of tribes," as one cuneiform inscription terms it; while another inscription designates Babylon as "the town of the root of languages."

Both Abram and Sarai dwelt in Chaldæa, in the very district bearing the name of their ancestor Arphaxad, in that city of Ur, whose name in the cuneiform languages is "the dwelling of Ouannes," or of the fish-god, and is identified with the modern Um-Mugheir.

The Lower Euphrates was the seat of an empire in which idolatry prevailed to an extent that to us seems unaccountable, particularly when we recollect that all who were then living in ripe manhood and womanhood were the descendants of one man, deceased but a few years before, and the devoted worshiper of the one true God. Indeed, we are now putting together from the mounds of Babylon and Nineveh the historical records of that same empire and that idol worship. Thare (Terah), Sarai's father, was himself an idolater (Josue xxiv. 2). From out the

whole mass of erring humanity, she and her husband would alone appear to have remained true to God, and to be therefore chosen by him to preserve in their blessed seed the knowledge and love of the Holy Name, and the cherished faith in the promised Redeemer and Restorer.

One mighty trial is hinted in Scripture as put upon her womanly heart before the divine voice summoned Abram forth from the land and the people. In 2 Esdras (Nehemiah) ix. 7, it is said that God brought Abram "forth out of the fire of the Chaldees." Josephus affirms that Abram was superior to his fellow-countrymen in learning, eloquence, and virtue, and that he determined to spread among them and all mankind a knowledge of the true God and his worship. The worship of light and fire formed the central part of the Chaldæan idolatry; and Abram "ventured to publish his opinion" in opposition to the popular belief. "If," said he, "the sun and moon, and all the heavenly bodies, had power of their own, they would certainly take care of their own regular motion. Since they do not take care of their own regularity, they make it plain, that, in so far as they co-operate to our advantage, they do it not of their own abilities, but as they are subservient to Him who commands them, and to whom alone we ought justly to offer our homage and thanksgiving." With the irregularity here complained of, modern astronomers may not agree, nor may they value much the consequence drawn from such premises; but we are not putting forth an argument. On the nature of the Chaldæan worship a singular light is thrown by the recent discoveries. They reveal the fact that the Mesopotamian populations did not confine themselves to a bloodless sun and star worship, but that they united with the idolatry akin to the monstrous systems of India and China the mythology and demon-worship afterward prevalent throughout Western Asia, Egypt, and Europe. The homage paid to the supreme god Ilu was comparatively pure; not so, however, the worship of the double triads of gods and goddesses whom they adored as emanating from his substance. We know from 4 Kings xvii. 31, that in Sippar, near Babylon, both to Ouannes or Anu Malik, the ocean god, and to Adar Malik, the

Chaldæan Saturn, were immolated human victims. Thus in the days of Abram, as well as in those of the exiled Israelites, the Babylonian cities "burnt their children in fire" to propitiate their demon-gods. And it was the altars of this same Anu Malik of the Assyrian discoverers that Abram may have sought to overthrow in the city of Ur, of which Anu was the tutelar deity. At any rate, Josephus goes on to say that "the Chaldæans and other people of Mesopotamia raised a tumult against him" (Abram); and "he thought it prudent to leave the country."

Other Jewish traditions say that the noble-hearted teacher of an unpopular creed was cast publicly into the fire, God delivering him therefrom miraculously; that this deliverance wrought the conversion of his father Thare, and his other kinsfolk; and that thus purified, like gold in the fire, God chose Abram as a most precious vessel in which to preserve for all future time the deposit of revealed truth.

But even if Sarai was not doomed to witness this crucial test of her husband's fidelity to God, and of God's truth toward his servant, there was, in the daily and hourly persecutions which popular fanaticism can silently inflict on the object of its hatred, an ordeal for both their souls, more to be feared than the tortures of the furnace or the blazing pile. That ordeal they both had certainly to undergo until the day dawned when their Master found them fit for his purposes.

"And the Lord said to Abram, Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xii.). Then it was, in obedience to this call, that "Thare took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Aran, his son's son, and Sarai, his daughter-in-law, and brought them out of Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Chanaan; and they came as far as Haran (Charran), and dwelt there."

Sarai was now in her sixty-fifth year; and her surpassing beauty does not seem to have suffered blight or decrease. But in

tearing herself away for ever from country, kinsfolk, friends, and all the dear associations that bind us so closely to our native soil, she was not even consoled by having child of her own on whom to bestow the affection that is ever welling up and overflowing in the exile's heart. God had promised Abram to make them the parents of an entire nation; but as they turned their backs on Chaldæa, and their faces westward to those lands where wave after wave of emigrants had preceded them, the realization of the divine promise receded farther into the dark future; and Sarai's long-cherished hopes resembled the mirage on the parched plains over which they traveled, daily mocking the thirsty and footsore pilgrims with bright visions that vanished as they drew near.

At Charran, in the lovely region around the modern Chabour, the wayfarers tarried some space, and there closed the eyes of their parent Thare, taught by his children, ere earth disappeared for ever from his sight, to look up for mercy to Jehovah. And then began the long march toward the setting sun, leaving part of their relatives behind them in Charran, amid fertility and affluence, taking with them their nephew Lot whom they had adopted, and directing their course "they knew not whither," and cared not, so long as they followed the will of Him who was to be thenceforward their sole light and stay and hope.

The whole Mediterranean seaboard, from Tarsus in the north to the mouth of the Nile, and westward along the African shore, was in the possession of the same Chamitic race who had planted the empire of violence and idolatry along the Euphrates and the Tigris. The sensual Chanaanites occupied the beautiful and teeming valleys that radiate around the mountain-chains of Libanus and Carmel, and were building up at Tarsus, Tyre, Aradus, and Sidon centers of commercial activity and of political and religious power, whose influence should be soon felt far and wide. This same land of Chanaan, then truly flowing with milk and honey, was the goal of Abram's journey, and the destined inheritance of his posterity. Did any prophetic vision float before Sarai's mind, or any secret presentiment fill her heart with the sweet assurance, as she and her husband crossed the Jordan near

the Sea of Galilee, that One sprung from her, and in whom all nations should be blessed, would one day press these same shores with his feet, and waken with his words of power the echoes of yonder dark blue waters?

Through rich pastures, and hills planted with the vine and the olive, to "the noble vale" of Sichem (Shechem) between its flowering Alps, opening up a vista as of the garden of God, and worthy of being the abode of paradisiacal man, the peaceful caravan wended its way. There, while the wanderers rested in their first blissful sleep beneath the sky of Palestine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "To thy seed will I give this land." We can imagine the patriarch awakening his courageous wife to communicate to her the purport of this new promise; or it may be that he who honored in her the ancestress of the future God-man made her now the sharer, with her husband, of these glad tidings, and shed on her eyes the glory of his presence.

At any rate, they built an altar there, on the hillside, near the site of the future city of Bethel, and poured out their hearts in grateful sacrifice to their Guide and Benefactor. Farther on to the south, whither the divine instinct now led them, another altar was built, apparently with greater solemnity; and, as a protestation against the idolatry that defiled the land as well as to take formal possession thereof in the name of the living God, Abram "called upon his name."

Southward still the pilgrims sped, planting their tents, now in one place, and now in another, as though surveying in advance the scenes of Christ's labors, and planting their footprints on every spot to be one day consecrated by his blessed feet. To Bethlehem, it may be, and to Jerusalem, they journeyed, everywhere "calling on His name" in whom they believed and trusted with a loving faith that no delays could weaken, and no disappointments shake.

They were bound to go to Egypt too, marking out a pathway for the Babe afterwards divinely preserved from Herod's pitiless sword. And here occurs for Sarai a danger more to be feared than the flames of the Chaldæan furnace. Famine visited this

land of Chanaan, naturally so fertile; and the strangers, whose herds and followers could not find subsistence there, sought a temporary relief in Egypt, ever blessed with plenty. Josephus gives an additional motive to Abram's journey thither: he was desirous of thoroughly learning their philosophic and religious systems, and of spreading among them the knowledge of Jehovah. But, being aware of the licentious and despotic temper of the Egyptian rulers, he gave way to a fear lest the beauty of Sarai should cost him his life. Being childless, they agreed to pass for brother and sister, and to conceal their relation of husband and wife. It would appear to be an unworthy subterfuge; and the Scriptures, in relating it, with their wonted candor relate, also, the terrible consequences to which the deception well-nigh led.

The princely rank of the strangers, and, still more, the marvelous beauty of the Chaldæan lady, were noised abroad through the land; and the Pharaoh who ruled in Lower Egypt hastened to secure the possession of the latter.

To Christian eyes illuminated by faith, the signal deliverance wrought by the divine intervention, when all human aid seemed powerless to avert dishonor, will not appear extraordinary. Sarai represented both the church of the old law and that of the new, who is called "Christ's spouse undefiled." God owed it to himself, to Abram, who bore the figure of Christ, and to Sarai, who typified his church, to save her from every stain.

Man's extremity is also God's opportunity. When the agony of the two hearts was at its height, the Almighty hand was stretched forth: its touch warned Pharaoh of the wrong he was about to commit. Besides, he believed Sarai to be still unwedded, and deemed he was honoring her brother by the contemplated connection. Abram was rebuked for his subterfuge; and his wife was restored with every demonstration of honor, and every mark of liberality, that could repair an evil partly unintentional. It is said that Abram then carried out his design of visiting the most famous seats of Egyptian learning, and of imparting, in return for the instruction derived therefrom, a knowledge of astronomy and arithmetic. But of this there is no mention in the Bible.

Thus was verified of Abram and Sarai the saying of the

Psalmist: "They passed from nation to nation, and from *one* kingdom to another people. He suffered no man to hurt them; and he reproved kings for their sakes. Touch ye not My anointed; and do no evil to My prophets" (Ps. civ. 14, &c.).

With increased gratitude and trustfulness toward God, and clinging more tenderly to each other, they now returned to the oaken groves and rich pastures of Bethel. The valley at that period, and before the dreadful fate that soon overwhelmed Sodom and its kindred cities, opened into the magnificent sweep of lowlands extending from the Sea of Galilee downwards, and embracing the whole territory of the Dead Sea.

Here Lot departed from his adopted father and chief: we know from the tragic story of Sodom's guilt and punishment, how dearly the selfish nephew paid for his imprudence and love of false independence. New blessings came to Abram with each succeeding year, new power, fresh honor in the eyes of the Chanaanites, and even the halo of success in war. Melchisedech, the priest-king of Jerusalem, blessed him in the name of the Most High. The covenant between himself and his Master, and its accompanying promise of a countless posterity, were reiterated with increased solemnity. Still no child gladdened his hearthstone; and Sarai's brow, as age and its infirmities came on apace, was not encircled with the crown of maternity. In her unselfish love for her husband, and her anxious desire to see the divine promises fulfilled even in children that were not her own, she persuaded him to follow the custom, too common in their native land, and universal among the heathen of Palestine and Egypt, and take from her own hand a concubine in the person of her Egyptian servant Agar.

Whatever may be the excuses alleged in favor of this mitigated form of polygamy at this early stage of the history of mankind, there is no need to offer any here.

In every instance where the Scriptures set before us God's privileged servants electing to do what is a moral imperfection, or even choosing what is least perfect, instead of what is most, we are made to witness in the event disappointment, bitterness of soul, and, not unfrequently, calamities. We have just seen how

Abram's subterfuge in Egypt was followed by perils from the thought of which a chaste soul recoils with dread. Further on (Gen. xx.), the very same pusillanimous course brings on precisely similar dangers that are averted by another act of divine interposition.

Making every allowance for the age, the country, and other extenuating circumstances, we are bound to judge Sarai's offer and Abram's acceptance in the light of Christ's teaching, and in that of the eternal fitness of things consecrated by the primitive institution of matrimony. God, the Author alike of the natural and the supernatural order, would have perfect and eternal unity in the love from which the family springs. Two mothers, in the home that Nature approves and God would bless, must never divide the affections of the father's heart, nor divide either the filial veneration of his children, or the obedience of his servants. One undivided love, ever deepening and widening with successive years, growing purer and holier with time, — such is the love intended by the Creator, and commanded by the law of the gospel.

No sooner is Agar a mother than she despises her childless mistress. No sooner does Isaac, the child of the promise, appear in the great patriarch's home by the side of Ishmael than there is strife between the mothers, cruel affliction in the father's soul; and peace can come only at the price of unnatural separation.

But we are anticipating. The end of the trial put upon Sarai's lively faith and yearning trust in her God was about to be rewarded, but not till time had, in its seemingly interminable course, brought her to her ninetieth year, and Abram had begun his hundredth. Well may such heroic reliance on the word of Him who is very truth remain for all future ages as a solitary and shining lesson. Then a new covenant is made: Abram (the Exalted Father) is changed to Abraham (Father of a Multitude); and Sarai (the Contentious) becomes Sara or Sarah (Princess or Lady). Three angels are also deputed to Sara to reward her long-waiting by a direct and solemn promise that her hope is soon to be fulfilled.

From the home honored by such a presence, and in reward of such virtues, the angelic visitors speed to pour the divine vengeance on the wicked cities of the valley. When they return the next year, Isaac is laid, like a treasure beyond all price, and a delight beyond the reach of thought, on that motherly heart. Hope, like the century-plant, had survived the winters of ninety years, and blossomed, and borne its solitary fruit, filling the whole valley with fragrance and joy.

How tenderly, how carefully, this child was reared amid scenes hallowed by God's visible and habitual intercourse with his parents, need not be told. Sara watched him, with all the pent-up love of a long lifetime, growing up to early manhood, when a supreme test was demanded of that father's oft-tried faith and generosity. He was asked to sacrifice with his own hand the son on whose head rested the destinies of his race; and this sacrifice he was required to make absolutely and unquestioningly, leaving it to God to send him, in his own good time, another child to fill the place of Isaac.

Was this dread requisition communicated to Sara when the aged patriarch and his boy left their home to go to that same mountain-top near which another Father, in after-years, was also to immolate his only-begotten Son? We are not told by Scripture. If Sara's heart was searched to its inmost depths of generosity by the intimation of the divine Will, then, indeed, no mother that ever lived on earth was tried like her, save that Mother of the Only-Begotten, to whom no pang was spared. But we believe that God, who associated the Mother of Sorrows in suffering with the second Isaac, because she represented Eve, was pleased to spare Sara the unutterable agony of that consent and that parting. Abraham's sublime generosity was the lively image of the charity of that Father, who, for our sakes, gave up his only Son to death.

Was it on that mountain-top, when Isaac was unbound from the altar, and restored to the paternal embrace, that the veil of ages was torn asunder, and Abraham was permitted to gaze on the divine reality typified by the sacrifice thus left unaccomplished? We know that Christ said of him, "Abraham . . .

rejoiced that he might see my day: he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56). Did Sara share in the ineffable consolations of that vision of the Redeemer's triumph in suffering, humiliation, and death? We may rest assured, at least, that Abraham delayed not to make known to her on what glories he had been given to look from afar. And oh! what reward was there in that one hour of blissful contemplation of the mystery hidden from the beginning of the world, for all the wanderings of half a century, for all the untold bitterness of exile and isolation in strange lands, and amid peoples hostile to the faith and hopes nearest to the wanderers' hearts!

Restored to his fond parents as from the gates of death, Isaac grew up to ripe manhood before the treasure of that mother's love was taken from him. That she labored through these years of unalloyed happiness to store the mind and heart of her worshiped boy with the faith in Jehovah that had been the guiding-star of her own existence, and with all the wisdom and manly virtues needful to the appointed ancestor of God's people, there is every reason to believe. How her own soul must have glowed with love for the Divine Majesty as the end drew nigh, and the sweet communion with himself and his angels, so often vouchsafed to cheer her exile, and raise her drooping hopes, became more intimate, and more uninterrupted, as the dawn of eternal day grew brighter in the east!

Abraham had long come to be looked upon as "a mighty prince" among the great ones of the land; and his princess was as much revered for her goodness as she had been admired for her incomparable graces of person. She died with the hands of Abraham and Isaac clasped in her own, looking serenely up to Him who had promised to be their "exceeding great reward;" for God alone, in the full communication of his life, glory, and happiness, can be the fitting reward of "the children of God." The princes of Palestine hastened to offer to the bereaved patriarch a choice among their most splendid sepulchers, in which to deposit all that was mortal of a woman tried and blessed as never woman had been. But Abraham would have for the resting-place of that heart so singularly all his own a tomb which

no heathen rites might defile. He purchased the Cave of Machpelah, and laid her there. No spot of earth, save one, — the sepulcher of her descendant, the Holy One of Israel, — is looked upon with such veneration, and guarded with such jealous care.

II.

Agar the Bondwoman.

IF the "bondwoman" and her wayward boy were dismissed with a brief mention in the preceding chapter, it is not because they are personages of little importance, but because they are so very important that they should have a separate notice.

For, if we trace back to the great princess and her son the line from which sprung the founders of Christianity and the parents of modern civilization, we are also bound to acknowledge in the tribes descended from Agar and Ismael the authors of a kindred creed and a parallel civilization, second only to Christianity in widespread influence. This shall be made manifest when we have studied a little more leisurely the historical figures of mother and son.

Abraham, after his return from Egypt, and his separation from Lot, dwelt for several years near that same Hebron where he and Sara now await the resurrection-day. An Amorrhite chief, named Mambre, allowed him to pitch his tents in a grove of lordly oaks, and to pasture his numerous flocks in the adjoining vale. It was while there, that the allied kings of Mesopotamia swooped down on the valley of the Jordan to punish a revolt of Chanaanite princes, and carried away into captivity the population spared by the sword. Among these were Lot and his family. Abraham, uniting his armed dependents with those of Mambre, followed the victors to the head-waters of the Jordan, defeated them with great slaughter, rescued the captives, and returned to the "vale of Mambre," hailed and blessed as a conqueror and a savior.

It was at this period, while in the very height of wealth, power, and fame, and while the land resounded with his praises, that Sara, despondent at her own childless condition, gave as wife to her lord "a handmaid, an Egyptian, named Agar" (Gen. xvi. 1). For ten years had Sara lived on amid these fertile valleys, with their setting of majestic mountain scenery, her husband's position becoming daily higher among the great ones of the land; but the devoted wife's eyes looked in vain for the coming of the heir to all this wealth and greatness. In the very first age of the world, and during the lifetime of Adam and Eve, polygamy was introduced into the family by Cain's evil brood. The practice of adding to the one lawful wife and mother inferior wives, no matter by what appellation dignified or disgraced, became general: the good themselves, even among the posterity of Seth, and, later, among the most favored descendants of Sem, yielded to the force of custom. We see it practiced by the patriarchs, apparently in good faith; and jurists and theologians have ever been divided as to its necessity and lawfulness, even at a period when humanity was in its cradle, and the young earth craved hands to till it or gather the spontaneous fruits of its teeming soil.

In these patriarchal households, none but a slave could be such an inferior wife. Bondage was an element inseparable from a condition so humiliating; and bondage was the fate of the vanquished in lawful war, or of the captives made in the incessant forays in which men indulged from the earliest historical times. War, slavery, and polygamy, like the fearful proneness to idolatry, are hard to account for in these primitive ages. God, who had given man free will, had to bear with its excesses and abuse, even as religion had to tolerate bondage and polygamy.

Agar was probably one of the female slaves bestowed on the princess by the Egyptian monarch, when he restored her with all honor to her husband. Some traditions say that she was herself of royal blood, a daughter of the Pharaohs. Her name is identical with the Arabic *Hajir*, "flight." Was she some nobly-born maiden, captured in a raid like that in repelling

which her present master had just distinguished himself? Did she see her home leveled, her parents massacred before the Egyptian raider had put the yoke on her neck? Egypt, in that day, extended its empire as far as Nubia and Abyssinia, and sought for slaves around those very lakes where we are now trying to trace the waters of the Nile to their head-spring. Perhaps it was because the high-spirited girl again and again broke her yoke, and fled from captivity and dishonor, that she was named *Hagar;* for names, in that early age, had a meaning and a purpose.

Certain it is that hers was not a tame soul; and the sequel shows her to be gifted with ardent and devoted affection. Perhaps this very trait in her character had endeared her to Sara, herself so unselfish and single-hearted. Nor is there room to doubt, that in choosing Agar to be mother to the heir of all her husband's possessions, to be mother of the child that she intended herself to adopt and love as her own, Sara gave her handmaid no equivocal proof of her confidence and esteem.

But there was, most likely, a great difference in their respective ages. So long as there had been no thought of raising Agar above the level of her fellow-servants, she looked up to the stately beauty of her lady with an admiration which was sincere, because shared by all who gazed on a countenance from which years had not taken away a single grace, while stamping it with a serener majesty. But with the prospects of maternity came new thoughts and new aspirations. It is not that the Bible narrative gives any hint that Abraham transferred to the handmaid a share, though never so slight, of the abiding respect and tenderness with which he regarded her whose whole being was interwoven with his own. In accepting Agar, he yielded to Sara's urgent prayer, while still hoping that the wife of his youth would yet bear the son on whose head should rest all the glories of God's renewed promises.

It may be, that, of Agar's companions, some sought her favor in her elevation, and first whispered comparisons injurious to their mistress; while others were but too ready to report to Sara, exaggerated or distorted, the very words of disparagement or

contempt they had themselves suggested. At all events, she "despised her mistress" (Gen. xvi. 4).

Jealousy, especially in such as Sara, — aged, childless, conscious of a long life's unbounded devotion to one blessed and honored of God and men alike, and conscious, too, of being the unselfish benefactress of the slave who would be her rival, — is all the more terrible, that it appears most just. "The Lord judge between me and thee!" Such is the passionate appeal of the lawful wife, who thinks her own place in her husband's heart usurped by another, and her honor in her household overshadowed by unworthy assumptions of superiority.

There surely was moral imperfection in the choice made by Sara, and consented to by Abraham, both because it was a departure from the original and divinely intended unity of marriage, and because it implied a distrust in God's power or willingness to give to Sara a son. And there is as surely injustice in Abraham's giving over to the unreasoning wrath of a jealous woman, one who, though but a slave, was now the mother of his child. "Behold thy handmaid is in thy own hand: use her as it pleaseth thee. And, when Sarai afflicted her, she ran away."

Nothing more powerfully moves the attentive reader to implicit trust in the truthfulness of the sacred writers than the simplicity with which they relate what is really or apparently censurable in the acts they record, as well as what is most praiseworthy. Polygamy is opposed to the perfection, at least, of nature's holiest institution: slavery is a condition that violates the dearest rights of humanity. See how nature, when wronged, soon turns on the evil-doer to plague him! "Use her as it pleaseth thee," is said to the mistress of her offending slave. That the "use," under the circumstances, soon became "ill-usage," and that the correction degenerated into intolerable oppression, the sequel tells but too well.

But He who made not man for slavery, but destined all, from the beginning, to the exalted "freedom of the children of God," will know when and how to repair the wrongs inflicted by the abuse of man's liberty and power. It was the duty of the patriarch, as father, king, teacher, lawgiver, and judge in his own

household, to instruct the poor slave given over to him in Egypt. Indeed, Philo says expressly that Abraham and Sara, as well by their saintly examples as by word of mouth, brought their Egyptian handmaiden to the knowledge and worship of the true God. Nevertheless, they fail, in the hour of passion and wrong, to show her, in their forbearance, kindness, and parental reproof, an image of the divine mercy toward the erring. The poor, vain, hot-headed, impulsive thing is made to feel, that, although a half-wife in the family, and about to become a mother, she is still but a slave. The yoke so galls her neck, that she flies, turning her face toward her native land.

The desert of Sur, into which the maddened woman plunges headlong, is now well known to the reading public from the detailed and graphic accounts published by travelers and scientific men. Even with skillful guides, and all the comforts and protection money can buy, there are great dangers in the appalling solitudes, with their trackless wastes and labyrinthine valleys, shut in by naked and jagged mountain walls.

How far she had sped on her desperate journey is not told; but she had lain down, sore of foot, and sorer of heart, by the brink of one of the fountains that dot, at rare intervals, the tracks leading toward Egypt. God, who knows of what a mixture of strength and weakness even the noblest souls are made, did not turn his eye away for one moment from the forlorn fugitive. She was his creature, whatever else she was; and he had a mission for her and her posterity. She had been also taught to call on his name in the hour of need. Perhaps her heart-cry had gone up to him before she sank down in exhaustion or in slumber beneath the scanty shade of the little oasis. Lo! God's angel stands by her. "Agar, handmaid of Sarai, whence comest thou? and whither goest thou?" — "I flee from the face of Sarai, my mistress." — "Return," is the injunction of the heavenly messenger, — "return to thy mistress, and humble thyself under her hand."

It is hard for the soul torn with a tempest of passion to listen to the divine Voice, even when it speaks in no dark or doubtful accents; and acquiescence seems impossible, when one is com-

manded to do what is most repugnant to the inner sense of justice. But the Author of our being knows how to touch its springs of action, and, while respecting the innate freedom of our will, to present to it such motives of action, and supply such incentives toward overcoming our inclination, that the victory of his grace becomes a sweet act of obedience. See how he deals with the rebellious spirit before us!

"Behold! [the angel here speaks in God's own name] . . . thou shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Ismael [*whom God hears*]; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. He shall be a wild man: his hand will be against all men, and all men's hands against him; and he shall pitch his tents over against all his brethren." So, before the eyes of this outcast and fugitive, the veil of futurity is lifted by the divine Hand, and the destinies of her babe and his posterity are disclosed. Through the long procession of ages, Ismael, living in his children, shall continue to believe in the God of Abraham; and the tents of the wild desert race shall never be far from those of the sons of Sara, whether these still hold their inheritance in Palestine, or mourn in captivity along the Mesopotamian rivers, or be dispersed by the sword of the Roman conqueror among the descendants of Japhet. There will be hostility between them, notwithstanding. No more bitter enemies of the religion and race of Israel have ever existed than the twelve sons of Ismael and their progeny, both before Mohammed and since.

In that vision, the fond mother most likely only dwelt with rapture on what flattered her ambition, — the long line of warlike and conquering tribes that were to look back to herself, and hail her Mother and Princess. Nor, though the Arabian sway has disappeared from Spain and Northern Africa, lingering like a sickly vegetation in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, has the progeny of Ismael yet ceased to possess in Arabia Proper the elements of an empire, warlike, cultivated, and as fanatical as the hordes which Mohammed or Omar first led to victory.

It can be truly said of the formidable Wahhabee power, nursed amid the beautiful and desert-bound valleys of Central Arabia, that their hand is against every man, and every man's

hand against them. God only, who in the present prepares the elements of future empires, revolutions, and civilizations, as he holds in his hand the nebular matter of future worlds in the dark and distant abysses of space, — God alone knows and can foretell what is to come of these two or three millions of Ismaelites concealed in the very heart of a continent till the dawning of the fated day that lets them loose upon the nations.

Well might Agar exclaim as the Voice ceased, the preternatural splendors disappeared, and the mysterious form of the speaker receded from her view, "Thou the God who hast seen me!" The light of that countenance had fallen upon her in her darkest hour, and made the wilderness appear a paradise. She would go back to her mistress now, and bear the worst. God watched over her: therefore would she bide the fulfillment of his gracious promises, and meanwhile accept the humiliations that awaited her.

But no further mention is made of punishment or hard usage. With the return of the lost one, humanity asserted its claims in the bosom of Sara; and nature, its obligations in that of Abraham. They both welcomed the birth of Ismael with joy; but the mother had her own mighty secret, and she could afford to conceal her exultation. Besides, with the knowledge of her boy's destinies, a feeling of just gratitude toward her mistress could now show itself in the offices of a more respectful love, and in the thousand graceful ways in which a heart so satisfied could pay the homage of its reverence and regard to a benefactress.

The sturdy boy had reached his thirteenth year when God made his solemn covenant with Abraham, and distinctly foretold the birth of Isaac. Sara's son alone is God's choice: from him is to spring the God-Man, in whom is the fullness of grace and blessing. While listening "flat on his face" to these joyous tidings, Abraham sends up one brief petition for the son already born; it sounds like a sob from a heart agonized at the prospect of some great impending evil: "Oh that Ismael may live before thee!" (Gen. xvii. 18.)

The answer comes promptly: With Isaac "and his seed after him," shall the "perpetual covenant" be made; "and as for

Ismael I have also heard thee. Behold, I will bless him, and multiply him exceedingly."

"The very same day" was Ismael initiated, by that sacrament prefigurative of baptism, into the special service of the Most High; nor since that day, despite the admixture of idolatrous rites in their worship, and often downright idolatry, despite their lawless life of desert warfare, blood, and pillage, have even the wandering Bedaween tribes, descended of Abraham's eldest son, omitted to set this seal of consecration on their sons. Much more so has this fidelity to traditional usage characterized the more direct descendants of Ismael, dwelling in the civilized communities of Central Arabia.

Even when the heir of the promises is born, and the whole surrounding country, as has ever been the Eastern custom, flock to the tent of the patriarch to celebrate the event, no instance is related of Agar's having resented by word or deed the supplanting of her boy in the homage of the entire household. Still it was but natural that both the slave and her son should keenly feel the change thereby produced in their own prospects, and in the attitude of all around them. Elder brothers, when fast approaching man's estate, and enjoying that consciousness of unlimited strength and length of years inseparable from their age, are but ill disposed to admit the superiority of a younger brother, and he a babe. Ismael was fond of warlike sports from early boyhood, and, though probably informed by both his parents of the divine promises concerning himself, he did not feel disposed to give up tamely to the infant Isaac the lovely alpine regions of Chanaan, with their exhaustless pasture-lands, broad lakes, majestic river, and delightful climate, for the mysterious and dreaded wildernesses that lay beyond, and the dark chances of building up there an independent and rival nation.

The headlong petulance and violence derived from his mother's African blood would break out more than once, disturbing the peace of the patriarch's tent, and filling his soul with forebodings of future strife.

Isaac was only a nursling, and could not be a playfellow for his boisterous brother. Besides, Sara watched both with that

jealous affection that no word or look escapes. In Isaac's third or fifth year came the "weaning feast," celebrated with a splendor in keeping with the rank and wealth of the parents. In the midst of the festivities, Sara noticed a burst of Ismael's fierce temper toward his younger. The text is obscure; but it hints at "mockery," or "violence," or habitual "persecution" (Gal. iv. 29), which on that day culminated in some scandalous outbreak. That spirit could no longer be overlooked. Isaac was but a child, whose meek and unresisting nature was like clay in the hand of the potter; and Abraham had long passed his hundredth year. If death should cut off the father before his heir had reached man's estate, who could protect the latter against the jealous violence of his brother, abetted and egged on by Agar's fiery ambition?

So these two mothers and their sons must part. "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son Isaac. Abraham took this grievously for his son. And God said to him, Let it not seem grievous to thee for the boy and for thy bondwoman. In all that Sara hath said to thee hearken to her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. But I will make the son also of the bondwoman a great nation, because he is thy seed." This assurance from on high came to the patriarch in the night. He could no longer hesitate, since God himself commanded the separation, and took Agar and Ismael thenceforward under his own immediate care. "So Abraham rose up in the morning, and, taking bread and a bottle (a skinful) of water, put it upon her shoulder, delivered the boy *to her*, and sent her away."

Among the hardy and temperate peoples of the East, bread and wholesome water are to this day the staff of life, and the staple of the travelers' food as they hurry across the desert. The inspired writer omits the loving words of comfort with which the venerable man encouraged both mother and son to depart, and to commit themselves wholly to the care of that true Father who had just renewed the prophecy of Ismael's greatness, and of his own especial providence over him.

Words of comfort fall chillingly on a mother's heart when thus turned adrift into the solitude of the wide world, without home,

protector, or friend among all mankind, and while the door of her child's father is irrevocably closed upon her. It was the second time that she directed her steps toward the desolate tracts of Southern Palestine.

"She departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Bersabee (Beersheba). And, when the water in the bottle was spent, she cast the boy under one of the trees that were there. And she went her way, and sat over against him a great way off, as far as a bow can carry; for she said, I will not see the boy die. And, sitting over against, she lifted up her voice, and wept." Man, even the most hardened, is moved by a mother's tears falling fast over a dying child, particularly an only one: how much more He who made the mother's heart, and created love and compassion there, like unfailing springs of succor and comfort for human misery! And He who has placed such deep wells of tenderness in woman's soul, doth he not possess mercy — the power to pity, to help, to save — in its infinitude? Forgetful and blind that we are! In our distress of to-day, we see only what is dark and desolate in our pathway: we conjure up a thousand difficulties and dangers that beset us as with a wilderness over which there is no road, and we think not even of God's miracles of deliverance wrought for us yesterday, nor of his nearness to us in our present need.

With the wailing of the poor mother arose cries of distress from Ismael. "And God heard the voice of the boy; and an angel of God called to Agar from heaven, saying, What art thou doing, Agar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the boy from the place wherein he is. Arise, take up the boy, and hold him by the hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes; and she saw a well of water, and went and filled the bottle, and gave the boy to drink. And God was with him: and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became a young man, an archer."

To mothers oppressed with care, and bereft, to all appearance, of all earthly aid and resource, what a lesson is here! But why limit its teaching and consolations to them? There are few homes within this broad Christian land, in which hours of dark-

ness and desolation do not fall, blotting out every green and refreshing spot on the face of the earth, and quenching the light of every star in the heavens. God himself, in these terrible moments, we think, has utterly forsaken us, withdrawing the presence that once filled the soul with joy and song. Oh! when we deem him far off, that ear is close to our lips, listening to the first whisper of our prayer, that heart is throbbing to pour forth its grace, and the succoring hand already outstretched to raise up the poor sufferer.

In the Arabian traditions, the desert in which Agar and Ismael wandered is placed near Mecca. There, too, is shown the fountain which the angel caused to burst forth for the boy's need. All the honors paid by the Israelites to Isaac and Sara the Arabs transfer to Agar and Ismael. She is the princess who introduced into Arabia the long robes, still distinctive of Arab women, and whose touch is sure protection to the stranger or the culprit, as if Agar still cast over them her royal mantle.

The last act related of her is her choosing an Egyptian wife for her son, probably from among her own kinsfolk. It was a fresh addition of wild impulsiveness to the blood she had given him. Was she present at the death of Sara, or the burial of Abraham? On all this, history is silent; but it is not likely that she ever returned to the scenes of her bitter humiliation. Her tomb, it is claimed, is in Mecca, with that of her son; the presence of their relics being one of the chief causes that render the spot so peculiarly sacred to Mohammedans.

A well-known passage of St. Paul (Gal. iv.) establishes a parallel between Sara and Agar and their respective offspring. Agar the bondwoman represents the religious system solemnly promulgated in fear from Mount Sina, whose privileges were local and temporary, and whose rewards were earthly: a slave herself, she could only beget slaves, subject to the yoke of the Mosaic ceremonial law. Sara, on the contrary, prefigures the Church, born of Christ, promulgated as a law of love on Calvary; the true spouse of Christ, a free mother, and giving birth to free children, opening her arms to the whole human race, bestowing on them the divine adoption, and with it conferring the right of co-heirship to a supernatural eternity.

Without pursuing the comparison, one reflection may be indulged in: that the Christian Church is the continuation and completion of the Jewish; that the one leads to the other, and finds in her the realization of the promises made to the patriarchs. We possess and adore what was foreshown to Abraham and to Moses, to Isaias and to Daniel; and, wondrous phenomenon, unlike every thing else in the present and the past, there are the synagogue and the church side by side on every land, after a lapse of nearly nineteen centuries, believing both in the same Redeemer, with this difference, that the Jew still looks forward to his coming, while the Christian believes in him as already come. There is that ancient race, as distinct from all others with whom it mixes as oil is from water: it lives and subsists side by side with the great Christian society to which it has given birth, just as the seed-leaves of some marvelous tropical tree, which never wither or fall off, remain a part of the giant trunk that issued from them, even when the latter shoots up, and towers above the lords of the forest. Nor is it to be forgotten that the race of Agar, even when becoming the apostle of a monstrous creed, rejected alike by Jew and by Christian, has always professed its belief in the God of Abraham, and proclaimed Christ Jesus to be his true prophet.

It must be our duty, as a new epoch draws nearer the nations to each other, to labor, by saintly lives and miracles of beneficence, to win our way to the hearts of the children of Sara and Agar. If we live as we ought, and love them truly, they will be ready to confess that, where true charity is, there, also, is the true faith.

III.

Rebecca the Bride.

WE return to the tent which Sara's death left empty, and to the son on whom had been poured forth for nearly forty years the treasures of a heroic mother's love, like the waters of a sealed fountain suddenly let loose.

During two years, at least, the rock-cave of Machpelah, that held her remains, had been for Isaac the dearest spot on all the earth, and the goal, we can easily believe, of his frequent, if not his daily, pilgrimages. It was now time to accomplish what must have been her most sacred duty, had she lived, and what may have been among her most anxious thoughts in her dying hour: Abraham bethought him of choosing a wife for his son.

It is, in all history, the most ancient, authentic record of a bridal. Nothing can replace here the simple solemnity of the Bible text. Eliezer, his oldest servant, and superintendent of his household, is summoned by Abraham, now in his one hundred and fortieth year, "That I may make thee swear (so the patriarch addresses him) by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, that thou take not a wife for my son of the daughters of the Chanaanites, among whom I dwell; but that thou go to my own country and kindred, and take a wife from thence for my son Isaac. The servant answered, If the woman will not come with me into this land, must I bring thy son back again to the place from whence thou camest out? And Abraham said, Beware thou never bring my son back again thither. The Lord God of heaven, who took me out of my father's house and out

of my native country, . . . he will send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take from thence a wife for my son. But, if the woman will not follow thee, thou shalt not be bound by thy oath: only bring not my son back thither again."

Eliezer swears as he is bidden. He is himself thoroughly penetrated with the deep religious spirit that moves his master and friend; and he sets forth on a journey with a princely train, bearing costly presents, and guided, as the patriarch had foretold, by God's angel.

They retraced the path followed by Abraham and Sara well-nigh a century before, as they journeyed from Mesopotamia to the land of promise. Along the valley of the Jordan, and between the snow-clad mountains near which it has its source, on to the plain of Damascus, and thence westward and northward across the Upper Euphrates and its tributaries, Eliezer and his company speed, till they are on the outskirts of that same Haran where Nachor separated from Abraham, and where Thare, their father, is buried. The populous city is called "the city of Nachor."

The aged servant had lived all his lifetime in a supernatural atmosphere: he was familiar with the miracles of protection wrought in favor of his master and his family. In so important a matter as the selection of a wife for Isaac, his great faith prompted him to ask of God a direct and sensible aid. It was evening when they came in view of Haran. Making his wearied camels lie down near a well outside the town, he waited for the usual coming of the women to draw water at that hour. Then lifting his heart to heaven, "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham," he prays, "meet me to-day, I beseech thee, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand nigh the spring, . . . and the daughters of the inhabitants of this city will come out to draw water. Now, therefore, the maid to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher that I may drink, and she shall answer, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let it be the same whom thou hast provided for thy servant Isaac."

The performance of a kindly act of hospitality to a thirsty

wayfarer, without even inquiring who and whence he is, and the further humanity of attending to the need of the poor dumb animals patiently waiting yonder a helping hand, — such are the tokens by which the fit companion of God's chosen one is to be known. "He had not yet ended these words within himself," when, just as the setting sun was flooding the lovely hill-country with his golden light, the procession of maidens streamed out of the city.

Behold! "an exceeding comely maid, and a most beautiful virgin . . . having a pitcher on her shoulder . . . went down to the spring, and filled her pitcher, and was coming back. And the servant ran to meet her."

What he had asked as a token of the divine pleasure happens to the letter. "Drink, my lord. And quickly she let down the pitcher upon her arm, and gave him drink. . . . And, pouring out the pitcher into the troughs, she ran back to the well to draw water; . . . and she gave to all the camels. But he, musing, beheld her in silence, desirous to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not."

He forthwith inquires whose daughter she is, and "Is there any place in thy father's house to lodge? And she answered, I am the daughter of Bathuel, the son of Melcha, whom she bore to Nachor. . . . We have good store of both straw and hay, and a large place to lodge in." She is Abraham's grand-niece, therefore the large-hearted daughter of a hospitable house. Beauty, purity, generosity of spirit, true piety, true religion, with Abraham's kindred blood, — all are there that can grace the wife of Isaac.

"The man bowed himself down, and adored the Lord, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not taken away his mercy and truth from my master, and hath brought me the straight way into the house of my master's brother."

"Then the maid ran, and told in her mother's house all that she had heard. And Rebecca had a brother named Laban, who went out in haste to the man to the well, . . . and said to him, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord: why standest thou without?"

There is then a warm and religious welcome for the travelers,

who come from afar to bind together anew the long separated portions of a once united family. But weary though Eliezer is, and bountiful as is the table set before him, one question must be answered, ere he will touch their hospitable fare. "I will not eat till I tell my message." He then relates briefly the story of Abraham's miraculous career, his present position and affluence, the errand on which he is sent, his prayer to God at the well that evening, and the divine answer to it: he now requires that of Bathuel and Laban, Rebecca's brothers.

"The word hath proceeded from the Lord," they reply. "We can not speak any other thing to thee but his pleasure. Behold! Rebecca is before thee: take her, and go thy way, and let her be the wife of thy master's son, as the Lord hath spoken."

Again the grateful Eliezer prostrates himself in adoration and thanksgiving. "And bringing forth vessels of silver and gold, and garments, he gave them to Rebecca for a present. He offered gifts, also, to her brothers and to her mother. And a banquet was made; and they ate and drank together, and lodged there."

We have had but a glimpse of the beautiful bride, like a thing of light amid the falling shades of evening; and this glimpse has revealed some of the nobler qualities of the woman. But in the East at all times, and especially in the patriarchal age, maidens are given away by their male relatives, without their own inclinations being consulted. Is Rebecca willing to become the bride of a man she has never seen?

Far as Haran is from Hebron and Beersheba (*the well of the oath*), Abraham's present abode, the fame of his wisdom, his adventures, his power and affluence, and even his victory over the Mesopotamian kings, must have reached his brother's home. Then Isaac is the worthy son of so illustrious a sire; and, besides the wealth to which he is heir, the divine promises concerning him and his race can not but be known to his nearest of kin.

But Rebecca soon speaks for herself. With the morrow's dawn Eliezer resolved to begin his return journey. Vainly his hosts beg that the bride "stay for ten days with us." The success that has crowned his mission, Eliezer considers to be only a motive

for immediate departure. "Stay me not; for the Lord hath prospered my way. . . . And they said, Let us call the maid, and ask her will." She is sent for, and asked, "Wilt thou go with this man?" The answer comes, prompt and unhesitating, "I will." It is the response of a God-given love in a young, pure heart, for a worthy object. Such alone can enable the timid girl to tear herself away from all the dear ties of home, kindred, and country, to place herself under a stranger's guidance, face the ventures of a long and perilous journey, to be the life-companion of one she only knows by fame.

"So they sent her away, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his company, wishing prosperity to their sister. . . . Rebecca and her maids, being set upon camels, followed the man, who with speed returned to his master."

He bore with him now a treasure far more precious than the gold and the silver and the precious stuffs with which his camels were laden when he passed northward along the course of the Jordan. He needed both secrecy and speed, the perfect knowledge of the safest by-paths, the trust reposed in his prudence by his followers, and his own faith in the invisible guardians who watched over himself and his little band, to pass unchallenged and unmolested through the brutal and godless race, who were the worthy kinsmen of Sodom, and the other recently whelmed "cities of the plain."

The meeting of bride and bridegroom occurs at the very well in the desert at which the fugitive Agar was blessed with her vision of Ismael's future greatness, and which she thence named Beer-la-hai-roi, "the well of Him that liveth, and seeth me." Abraham and his family had been obliged, either from the number of their flocks, or the jealousy of the populations around Hebron, to migrate for a time to the untenanted country in the extreme south of Palestine.

A single line in the sacred text lets us into the secret of the bridegroom's character and habits. As the train, led by Eliezer, was approaching unperceived, "Isaac was walking along the way to the well. . . . He was gone forth to meditate in the field, the day being now well spent." Rebecca's chosen husband is then

a man of quiet ways and meditative mood, such an one as we should expect Sara's son to be, nursed by her so tenderly in the autumn of her eventful life, with mind and heart fed by the wonderful lessons of his mother's personal experience, and the study of the mysterious destinies in store for himself and his progeny. This disposition had been confirmed by the tragic occurrences of Mount Moriah, as well as by the aversion which he felt for Ismael's wild and roving life.

To this man, so thoughtful, gentle, and retiring, is Rebecca brought from the far Syro-Mesopotamian hills, like a stream of pure water from the northern solitudes, which falls into the calm bosom of the Galilean Lake. "And, when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw camels coming afar off. Rebecca also, when she saw Isaac, lighted off the camel;" and, being told by Eliezer who it was, "she quickly took her cloak, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all that he had done; who brought her into the tent of Sara his mother, and took her to wife; and he loved her so much, that it moderated the sorrow which was occasioned by his mother's death."

For thirty-five years more, Abraham dwelt near his son, watching the peaceful current of his wedded life. But for twenty years no offspring blessed this union with Rebecca. Then to their prayers were given Jacob and Esau.

No need to dwell at any length on the well-known story of the two boys, — their adverse dispositions; the partiality of Rebecca for her younger son, how he played upon his elder brother's impatient and headlong appetite, to make him barter away the priceless boon of his birthright, annexed to which were the divine "promises;" and how, counseled by his fond mother, Jacob deceived his father (who was no less partial to Esau), so as to obtain the solemn blessing which gave him the full privileges of primogeniture and headship in the family.

The Scripture distinctly points out this twofold partiality of the parents, so tenderly united in their own conjugal affection, yet so unhappily divided in their love for their sole offspring. This partiality, and the artifice conjointly practiced by Rebecca and her favorite on the blind and dying patriarch, have been a

fertile theme of conflicting commentaries for Christian and Jewish theologians alike.

This much, at least, may strike every reader of the Bible as evident: that well informed as Esau must have been of the manifold prerogatives attached in that age, and in his own family above all, to the quality of first-born son, he displayed a brutal contempt thereof, in even entertaining a proposition to barter them away for a mess of pottage, and a sacrilegious levity in confirming the exchange by the solemnity of an oath. Hence St. Paul (Heb. xii. 16) calls him "a profane (sacrilegious) person." "Esau swore to him. . . . And so, taking bread and the pottage of lentils, he ate and drank, and went his way; making little account of having sold his first birthright" (Gen. xxv. 33, 34).

This unbridled sensuality, coupled with the uncontrollable violence of his nature, may account for the mother's preference of the boy in whom shone forth so conspicuously the gentleness and tender piety she worshiped in her husband. She judged, and judged rightly, that one who could not for a brief space restrain his appetite, and whose anger was as fierce as the headlong torrent, would not be fit to govern a large household, or control the precarious destinies of a patriarchal tribe, in a strange land, and among jealous or hostile populations. Still less could a man who held in contempt his own most sacred rights, and the most awful forms of religion, be trusted with the headship of a race on which depended the religious future of all mankind.

Then, again, it is no less certain that Rebecca, beside these motives of preference, had been warned by God himself, before she had given birth to her boys, that they represented "two nations" and "two peoples;" that "one people shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger." This prediction comes to us bearing the seal of divine authority. The mother, to whom it was directly made, had, therefore, God's own warrant for considering Jacob as preferred of Heaven itself. Nor is it improbable that Jacob was apprised of its import before he obtained the cession of Esau's birthright.

When this transaction took place between the brothers, they

had reached man's estate, though their age is not mentioned: they were seventy-seven when Isaac fancied he was on his death-bed. In the interval, and in his fortieth year, Esau, to the grief, if not to the horror, of his parents, married two Chanaanite wives, who, being idolaters, brought with them a fatal element of division into a family whose affections and hopes were expected to be set, above all else, on the worship and protection of the one true God.

Thus Esau, who had already, by a free and solemn covenant, transferred his birthright to his brother, had no just claim to the paternal blessing which went with the birthright, and of which the whole tenor of his life made him most unworthy. Jacob was in fact the rightful heir, the elder brother. When, at his mother's bidding, he substitutes himself for Esau, and even calls himself by that name, there is, in the light of God's supernatural providence over that family, every reason to believe that Rebecca acted under the impulse of divine inspiration. The divine will had manifested itself before the birth of these boys: her direction of Jacob's conduct had been in conformity with that will, and she was now only fulfilling the last condition necessary in order that the "elder should serve the younger."

Such is the line of reasoning pursued on this delicate subject by Saint Gregory-the-Great, the Venerable Bede, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and others. Still, in seeking to justify what may appear blameworthy in the conduct of saintly personages living under a code of morality far less perfect than that of the gospel, they do not attempt to palliate injustice, or to excuse falsehood, in itself always and everywhere essentially wrong. As in the deception practiced by Abraham upon Pharao and Abimelech, and a similar one afterward practiced by Isaac upon the son and successor of the same Abimelech, so here we can not help wishing that the patriarchs had manifested both a stricter regard for the truth, and a firmer trust in that special providence vouchsafed to them so visibly and so constantly.

Rebecca was aware that her younger son was God's choice; that to him it was reserved to be the father and ruler and priest of the family from which alone should come the race selected to

preserve to the world the true faith and hope in the promises made to Adam, and more solemnly reiterated to Abraham; that for Jacob alone was kept in store the supernatural blessing annexed to the covenant made with the latter.

Indeed Jacob's very name, *supplanter* (if not bestowed in after-years by tradition, and thus recorded by the historian), was a perpetual note of warning to the elder brother. We can not imagine that Isaac was left in ignorance of the prediction made to his wife, and of the change it imported in the respective positions of his sons. This knowledge is not inconsistent with predilection for Esau; for men, as well as women, often love those who are closely connected with them for the very qualities which they are conscious of not possessing themselves. Woman likes strength in man, because she is weak and dependent, and will not lean on a reed: hence she abominates effeminacy, as indicating the utter absence of what she needs as a complement to her own nature. And the gentle, timid, and sickly Isaac may have loved in his eldest son the manly, robust, and warlike qualities which made him "a hunter and a man of the field," both because he and his younger son lacked them, and because, in these troublous Eastern climes, a strong arm to wield the lance and the sword, and a bold, intrepid spirit, could alone found a family, enlarge its possessions, and defend them against all comers.

It would, therefore, seem that the most natural and simple course for a mother initiated into God's secrets, like Rebecca, to pursue toward a God-fearing though unwisely-loving father, like Isaac, was to remind him of the divine preference, already justified in Esau's personal character, in his disregard of parental authority, his contempt of the law of God and sacred things, in his having sacrilegiously bartered away his right of primogeniture, both in its temporal and spiritual aspects; and to insist that the solemn death-bed blessing should be given to him who was, both by God's ordinance and his brother's deliberate act, the rightful heir to the covenant promises and blessing. That, instead of this, any kind of deceit or subterfuge was resorted to, must be a cause of regret to all modern readers of sacred history, no matter how much they may be otherwise disposed to

find excuses or extenuating circumstances in the conduct of Rebecca and Jacob.

Finally: they acted in a certain good faith. And in an age of unholy violence, when cunning was the only defense of the weak, that they ignorantly believed in the blamelessness of their stratagem, we may well suppose; for such is the opinion of many among the wisest and purest even of our race.

In this view, we must understand that Rebecca knew she ran no risk when Jacob hesitated to assume the proposed disguise, lest he should bring upon himself "a curse instead of a blessing." "Upon me be this curse, my son," replies the mother: "only hear thou my voice, and go." There is no need here of seeing a heroic act of maternal love, where the issue was so surely known to the speaker.

When Esau returned too late, and Isaac had discovered his mistake, the former reveals the facts, till then kept secret from his parent. "He (Jacob) hath supplanted me, lo! this second time. My first birthright he took away before; and now this second time he hath stolen away my blessing." But that blessing in its mightiest import was never designed for him; nor had he ever done aught to merit it. Hence, when urged to bestow a second blessing on the disinherited, Isaac answers, "In the fat of the earth and in the dew of heaven from above shall thy blessing be. Thou shalt live by the sword, and serve thy brother.

"Esau, therefore, always hated Jacob, . . . and he said in his heart, The days will come of the mourning of my father, and I will kill my brother Jacob."

The domestic tragedy goes on deepening in the tents of the dying patriarch. The idolatrous wives of Esau shared their husband's passions; and Rebecca especially was made to feel the weight of their resentment. "And Rebecca said to Isaac, I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the stock of this land, I choose not to live."

Her quick ear has also heard the mutterings of Esau's fratricidal wrath, or it has found a free echo in the curses of his wives. So she bids him "flee to Laban . . . to Haran." "And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, saying, Take not

a wife of the stock of Chanaan, but go . . . to the house of Bathuel, thy mother's father, and take thee a wife thence of the daughters of Laban thy uncle. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee to increase, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people."

And so, as the century of her life drew towards its close, Rebecca remained alone by the bedside of her sick husband, whom God was to restore and preserve for many years more, her motherly heart burthened by many cares, grief arising from Esau's evil ways, and anxiety for him who is now on the road to far-off Haran. These two were never more to meet upon earth.

But into the web of her life, so full of graceful and threatening scenes, we have to weave other bright figures from her native hills.

IV.

Rachel and Lia.

IN Rebecca's paternal home in Haran, the idol-worship of Assyria and Chaldæa had penetrated like the rising waters of an inundation that bore every thing before it. It is an unaccountable fact, that while Sem, the witness of the deluge, and Heber, the immediate ancestor of the Abrahamic family, were still living, their voice and example should have lost all power to preserve even the home of Abraham's brother from this wide-spreading pollution. And yet, as Jacob began his memorable journey toward Mesopotamia, Sem and Heber were alive, and probably living there.

If we should feel tempted to blame Rebecca for having brought up her youngest son somewhat like a hot-house plant, carefully kept away from the surrounding atmosphere of idolatry, and the monstrous vices that made it deadly to breathe, the excuse is apparent. We have also here the secret, and the obvious excuse for the timidity, the want of self-reliance and straightforwardness, displayed by Jacob more than once in his subsequent career, and resulting both from his inherited temper, and from his home-culture up to long after his seventieth year. This, too, prepares us to understand the full significance of the sublime lesson divinely given him at the very first stage of his journey.

He had lain down to rest, lonely and homesick, beneath the canopy of heaven, on the bare earth, and with a stone for his pillow, near a city then called Luzah; being, in his present

homelessness and helplessness, the lively image of Him who, long afterward, journeyed over these same plains, and had not whereon to lay his head. With sleep came a vision to him, disclosing, as it were, a ladder connecting heaven and earth, and angels ever ascending and descending. Where the end seemed to touch heaven, the Lord of Glory leaned down toward his servant, and renewed to him personally the promises made to his fathers, and gave him the solemn assurance of the divine protection in all places, till he should bring him safe back to that land. It was a foreshadowing of the Incarnation, with the God-man as sole Mediator and way from earth to heaven, and the angelic hierarchy ministering to the spiritual needs of those who were to be co-heirs with Christ. It was a vision that might well console him amid his present sacrifices and troubles, and fill him with unfaltering faith and trust in God for all future emergencies.

The soul, thus flooded with light from above, would now have nothing to fear from the spectacle and practices of Assyrian demon-worship. Well might he exclaim in the mingled awe and exultation with which he awoke, "How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven."

He called the name of the place Bethel (the house of God), in memory of this transcendent favor, and went on his way rejoicing.

He reaches "the east country," falls in with Haran shepherds and their flocks near the very well, most probably, at which we had our first glimpse of Rebecca. "They were yet speaking, and, behold, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she fed the flock. And when Jacob saw her, and knew her to be his cousin-german, and that they were the sheep of Laban, he removed the stone wherewith the well was closed, and, having watered the flock, he kissed her; and, lifting up his voice, wept."

The girl before him "was well favored, and of a beautiful countenance," reminding the affectionate son of what his idolized mother must have been when she first shone in the full splendor of her early loveliness upon Eliezer, on this same spot: the heart of this man, who has never looked with admiration

upon any woman's face till now, but that mother's, goes out in one burst of love to her living image; and he weeps with uncontrollable emotion, even in presence of these stranger shepherds.

The two hearts thus brought providentially together were made and kept pure for each other by His hand from whom cometh every perfect gift. And, in the manifold weal and woe of home-life, what gift of God more perfect and more precious than the love which he kindles in the twin souls of husband and wife, like a flame from the altar of heaven, placed in consecrated vessels, and destined to light, cheer, and warm the home sanctuary through every vicissitude of fortune and age?

But under the law of nature in that patriarchal period, as now under the law of grace, hearts that God has filled with purest and deepest mutual love will be often further chastened by separation, poverty, and suffering, in order that their union shall be more blessed and blissful. We wonder, oftentimes, at the protracted preparations, delays, disappointments, and interruptions, that take place even in the supernatural order, and in carrying out some plan essential to the welfare of mankind. The Redeemer appears after four thousand years of sin, suffering, and expectancy. He comes to be born among his mother's kindred; and both are thrust out into a stable. Scarcely is he born, when he has to be suddenly taken off to Egypt; and then come the long, obscure years in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, followed by the three years of public preaching, incessant opposition and persecution, ending on the cross. So many thousand years, and then a crucifixion, and then the disciples of the crucified hunted down and slaughtered like wild beasts, the common foes of humanity, leaving only a despised, loathed, persecuted faith behind! The lives of the patriarchs, like that of Christ and his apostles, and of all who carry on his work to this day, have to be studied in the light of a wisdom far different from our every-day worldly sagacity and human prudence. We are apt to measure time as we measure space, with our own littleness as a standard. The circumference of the largest planetary orbit is far beyond the grasp of our eye; a cycle of a million of centuries is duration that overpowers thought: yet what are they to the

Immense and Eternal God? His chosen servants, partaking in some respects of his eternity, should remember that they, too, can sow seeds capable of bearing immortal fruit. Every thought and act of the children of God have something of infinite dignity about them, because animated by the Holy Spirit, who is infinite God. Hence, the pure and exalted charity which impels one to give a cup of cold water to the stranger asking it in Christ's name merits an eternal reward; while the consent, given freely, deliberately, and knowingly to an evil impulse, opens beneath the guilty soul a miserable eternity. He, our God, is patient with evil and disorder, because he is eternal; and the evil-doer must, sooner or later, come to him for judgment. He is also patient and slow in reaching his ends. We should be like him, — sow and labor, even where we can not reap now; because what we do under his guidance is sure to fulfill its purpose.

So, warm as is the welcome which the son of Rebecca receives from Laban and his household, and touching as is the silent devotion with which Jacob settles down to do the work of a serving-man in the house of her he now loves with an absorbing love, he is treated with a cold, calculating, commercial spirit: when pressed to name a reward for his labor, he asks for Rachel as his bride.

A princely train, with splendid presents, had come to woo and bear away Rebecca: her son comes, a fugitive and alone, in voluntary poverty and helplessness, to sue for the hand of her niece. It is not that he is heir to less wealth, or an inferior station. A brother's hate compels him to present exile, lowliness, and patient toil.

However, it is the surpassing love of the exile that we have to consider, — a love which the great Christian doctors have always compared to the long labors and sufferings endured by Christ in founding the Church. "I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter:" such is Jacob's spontaneous offer. It is most ungenerously accepted, and the seven years' servitude borne, unflinchingly and lovingly, beneath the eyes of the chosen one among all women. And here the beautiful words of St. Augustine apply in more senses than one, "Where one loves, one feels not labor; or, if labor wearies, the very weariness itself is loved."

The seven years have gone, and love claims its reward. Laban assents, seemingly. The family and friends are called together, and a wedding-feast prepared and celebrated. According to the law of nature, and the customs of the age and country, the assent of the parents was demanded only as a confirmation of the formally expressed consent of bride and bridegroom, to constitute a true marriage, acknowledged as such of God and man. Jacob and the assembled guests beheld Rachel as the bride won by a noble man, as bride had never been won before, — by heroic toil and self-abasement.

Yet by a vile and criminal artifice, Laban substitutes for the beautiful Rachel his elder daughter, the "blear-eyed" Lia, who, perhaps, piqued at Jacob's preference for her sister, and secretly loving him, lends herself to the fraud. It was a dreadful wrong done to those who were already in reality husband and wife. If ever Jacob (*the Supplanter*) had violated his own conscience in the acts by which he obtained his brother's place, he now meets with a terrible retribution. But this is no plea in extenuation of the guilt of Laban and Lia.

It is a business speculation on the part of the former; and his pitiless greed exacts seven years more of hard service before he will consent to Rachel's becoming Jacob's undisputed property. They compromise the matter, however, by Jacob's first serving "a week of days" as a pledge that he will afterwards serve out "the week of years;" and, at the end of the seven days, Rachel is given to her husband, finding her own sister before her to divide the heart and the home which Jacob had intended should be all her own.

These sad dissensions darken and disfigure the pages that record the wedded life of Jacob in Haran. He had ratified the substitution of Lia for Rachel; and thus, in accordance with the matrimonial customs of that heathen land, the two sisters became his lawful wives. Rachel, too, it appears, not only hated the sister who had so unworthily supplanted her, but despised her because of her homeliness. These manifestations of hatred and contempt aroused the divine anger; and, while Lia became the mother of six children, Rachel remained childless. By a mysterious dispen-

sation of God, of these first four sons of Lia, two, Levi and Juda, became the stems of the priestly and royal lines in God's people; and from both are descended Mary and her divine Son, Jesus. Thus, not Rachel, but Lia, the "blear-eyed" and "despised," is the ancestress of the Messiah.

From souls called to a high mission, and obliged to practice extraordinary virtues befitting their vocation, it is fatal, in periods of trial, suffering, and expectancy, to give way to weaknesses pardonable in those less favored. Rachel's love for Jacob was equaled only by that which he bore her, and which made the seven years of his hard service seem only a few days. She was but an unenlightened heathen, brought up in an idolatrous father's home; and, when her own sister usurped her place at the end of these weary years, her great love became a furious jealousy and a blind rage, that vented themselves in insult and scorn.

She was bitterly punished. Pride in her, and its unsparing attendant, scorn, were soon humbled to the dust. Still, in his own good time, God consoled her; and she became the mother of him who, among all the heroic names of the Old Testament, is second only to Abraham and Moses, — Joseph, the savior of his people and of Egypt, as well as Jacob's best beloved child.

He was of but tender years when Jacob resolved to set out on his return to Palestine. The feud between his wives was healed, their old sisterly affection returned, the odious conduct of their parent helping to draw closer the ties that bound them to each other, to their husband and his fortunes. "Hath he (Laban) not counted us as strangers, and sold us, and eaten up the price of us?" Such is the bitter feeling created in their hearts by Laban's greed and tyranny. So they bade their husband depart. "Then Jacob rose up, and, having set his children and wives upon camels, went his way. And he took all his substance and flocks, and whatsoever he had gotten in Mesopotamia, and went forward to Isaac his father in the land of Chanaan. At that time Laban was gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole away her father's idols;" whether because she believed in them herself, or wished by their subtraction to put a stop to his idolatrous worship, remains uncertain.

If there is, in the trials to which Jacob was subjected in Mesopotamia, very much that wins our sympathy and admiration, there are, also, details one would not regret to see omitted from the pages of sacred history. The wonders of the Yellowstone basin in our north-western territories are God's work as much as the sublimities of the Yosemite, or the loveliness of Wyoming. But it is sad work to have to pick one's steps among the pitfalls of a volcanic region, with the seething waters mining the soil beneath, or rushing in gigantic columns into mid-air, thus threatening the rash intruder with destruction at every moment. Sweeter far, because far more secure, is the traveler's enjoyment in some secluded vale of Virginia or New England, where man's passions have not yet marred God's fair works, but industry has improved the face of Nature.

One follows with increased interest the patriarch's steps as he journeys rapidly toward the land of Chanaan. His father-in-law pursues him in vain, and as vainly does his brother attempt to arrest his progress. God's angels watch over his family and his flocks, more potent to save than his own sons and their dependents; and God himself softens the hearts of brother and father-in-law more efficaciously than Jacob's humble speech and abject submission. He is a man of prayer too; and his earnest supplications wrest from that Goodness that will be importuned, a crowning blessing, and the name of *Israel*, for Jacob has "prevailed against God."

Thus blessed, he and his wives and children arrive in the lovely Vale of Sichem; and once more he stops at Bethel, not now a solitary fugitive, but a mighty chief with numerous offspring, and a formidable train of followers. He fulfills his vow, and builds an altar on the spot hallowed by the glorious vision vouchsafed to him in his darkest day. He would have the hearts of all his household devote themselves there to the God of his fathers. So the golden images of the Mesopotamian gods stolen by Rachel and Lia from their father, with every other badge of idol-worship to be found in his camp, were buried beneath the oak-tree that overshadowed the altar. We love to behold in spirit the united sisters kneeling there at the very

birthplace of Hebrew nationality, with their children beside them, the predestined parents of an immortal race.

Did Rachel, the wife who alone had his love, give her whole soul to the true God at Bethel? and did some portion of that light from heaven shed so abundantly in that spot on her husband's soul, visit her when death was so near? We are bound to believe it. As the now formidable caravan of the patriarch's family, dependents and herds, were journeying slowly from Bethel to Ephrath, the site of the future Bethlehem, Rachel gave birth to her second child, whom she called Benoni (*the Son of my Sorrow*), for his birth was her death, but whom the husband called Benjamin (*Son of the Right Hand*) in the first moment of exultation.

It was indeed but the joy of a moment. The lovely and beloved Rachel died with her eyes resting on those hills on which the boy David afterward pastured his father's flocks, and which were hallowed by the birth of the "Shepherd of shepherds." There her tomb still exists, honored alike by Hebrew, Saracen, and Christian, one more sacred spot, on which all who worship the true God can look with love and veneration.

Along the valley that skirts these hills, the Assyrian conqueror in after-days drove the captive tribes of Israel toward their long exile on the Mesopotamian plains. The prophet Jeremias, who witnessed the mournful procession, tells us that Rachel's motherly heart was troubled in death by the tread of the passing thousands who wept as they cast a last look at her tomb. "Thus saith the Lord: A voice was heard on high of lamentation, of mourning and weeping, of Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted for them, because they are not" (Jer. xxxi. 15).

There is not throughout the length and breadth of Christendom one child of Israel, yearning to see his long-lost nationality restored within the limits of Palestine, to whose heart the voice of every Christian man does not go forth in the wish and the prayer breathed in this page, and in connection with the very next verse from the prophet: "Thus saith the Lord: Let thy voice cease from weeping, and thy eyes from tears; for there is a reward for thy work, saith the Lord, and they shall return out of the land of the enemy."

Heroines of the Hebrew Nation.

Heroines of the Hebrew Nation.

Miriam, the Prophetess and Deliverer.

Debbora, Prophetess and Judge of Israel.

Jephte's Daughter.

The Mothers of Samson and Samuel.

Ruth and Noemi.

The Witch of Endor.

Michol and Abigail, Wives of David.

The Queen of Saba.

Jezabel and Athalia.

The Widow of Sarephta.

The Lady of Sunam.

The Little Maid of Israel.

Judith, the Joy of Israel.

Queen Esther.

The Mother of the Machabee Martyrs.

V.

Miriam, the Prophetess and Deliverer.

OF the events, which, from age to age, were prophetic of the redemption of our race from the slavery of sin, the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt stands confessedly alone. And in this we find the two figures of a brother and sister, Moses and Miriam (or Mary), as the instruments by which God set his people free. To compare, in this, Moses with Christ, and Miriam with her great namesake, Mary, and to show, in the agencies employed in both instances, a victorious display of the divine power effecting the mightiest results with the feeblest means, has been a favorite theme with Christian writers. And not without a solid foundation in truth; for, just as one of the most charming inventions of modern science enables one to see in two images, alike in some respects, yet differing in others, one and the same object, even so, in the light of faith, do we see the prophetic figures of the Old Testament blended and identified with Christ, or his mother, or his apostles, in the New.

This will become more and more evident as we study closely such pregnant passages of sacred history as that which describes the oppression of God's people in Egypt, the means by which Providence undertook to deliver them, and the great personages who were the chief actors in the exciting drama.

It is a hackneyed theme, this story of the grinding tyranny by which the Pharaos sought, and sought with a hearty earnestness, to crush out the life of a people and a religion; and the names which stand most prominent on this memorable page of the world's

history have become so familiar, that it would seem impossible to connect them with any thing fresh or interesting. And yet, in this nineteenth century, and throughout the free Anglo-Saxon world, we are every day becoming more and more interested with that mysterious land of Egypt, with its marvelous ruins much more than with the colossal industrial undertakings of which it is the theater, and, more than all, with the stupendous monuments left behind by the very Pharaos who strove to blot out from the face of the earth the race of Israel.

Is there not something providential and highly instructive in the fact that the very buildings which modern artists have sketched and painted with most loving devotion, and the very hieroglyphics and pictorial scenes that cover them so profusely, all belong to the reigns that beheld the birth of Miriam, Aaron, and Moses, all point to the bright side of a story which has as dark a counterpart as ever filled an oppressor's annals? It is admitted by the very best authorities, that the era of Hebrew oppression began with the nineteenth dynasty, Rameses I., or Seti I., and ended with Merenphtah. Now, to this very epoch belong the great temple-palaces, whose ruins the traveler beholds on the opposite sides of the Nile at Thebes, standing in the moonlight like gigantic ghosts of departed pride: to it, also, belong the most beautiful edifices of Abydos, of Memphis and Tanis, and the rock-temples of Ipsambul in Nubia.

There are few of us but have gazed with a wonder not unmixed with awe, through the stereoscope, at exquisite line-engravings, oil-paintings, or colored prints, showing the "Hall of Columns" at Karnak, or Luxor and its obelisks and prodigious reaches of sculptured ruins, or on the Ramesseum on the opposite western bank of the river. Visitors in Paris may have examined at leisure the grand obelisk on the Place de la Concorde. But whether we studied these wrecks of regal greatness in the silence of our own libraries, or gazed at them, awestruck and mute with admiration, on the soil that bears them, did we ever bethink us, the while, of the myriads of slaves who were compelled to wear away their lives in building and decorating these temples of the most degrading superstition, these dwelling-places of a despotism

the most heartless and oppressive that ever made the earth to groan?

It was not Israel alone, though then increased to millions, that had to quarry these huge stones, and drag them hundreds of miles to their destination, or to prepare the vast masses of brick needed for all these constructions, or to burn the lime, and mix the mortar, beneath the pitiless lash of their taskmasters. We know, thanks to the achievements of modern science, that whole nations were transferred from Asia, or the remotest provinces of Egypt's African empire, to the valley of the Nile, there to live and labor in bondage, while native Egyptians were sent to colonize the homes thus left empty.

It will temper our admiration for the achievements of a civilization that has for ever passed away, and afford us a safe light with which to estimate our own, if we reflect on the price paid — in human tears and groans and blood, and in the unutterable misery and despair of millions — for these masterpieces of an art, a superstition, and a pride, that cursed the earth in the days of Moses.

Seti I., and his son Rameses II., appear to have been of foreign blood, connected both by their origin and their creed with the detested race of Hyksos or Shepherds. Among other unpopular changes, they substituted the worship of the sun for that of the national deity, Amun. There is thus reason to believe that they began the proscription of the Hebrew race and worship, for the purpose of making the Egyptian people forget their own descent and odious religious changes.

At all events, the oppressor resolved not to stop at half-measures in dealing with the Hebrews. "And he said to his people, Behold the people of the children of Israel are numerous, and stronger than we. Come, let us oppress them wisely, lest they multiply, and, if any war shall rise against us, join with our enemies, and, having overcome us, depart out of the land. Therefore he set over them masters of the works, to afflict them with burthens; and they built for Pharaoh treasure-cities [fortified cities as depots of treasures and grain], Phithom and Ramesses."

But, beneath the harrow of oppression, the blessed seed only sprung up, and multiplied the more. "The Egyptians hated the

children of Israel, and afflicted them, and mocked them. And they made their life bitter with hard works in clay and brick, and with all manner of service, wherewith they were overcharged in the works of the earth."

The manifold toil necessary to erect such cities as were then the ornament and boast of Egypt had a something ennobling in it; for there was a wide scope for the exercise of skilled labor in these sculptured towers and walls that have withstood the rage of Persian and Mohammedan, the working of flood and fire, and the defacing action of the elements, for three thousand years. So when the tyrant had built his cities, and compelled his drudges to hoard up there the very produce of the fields they cultivated, and of the herds they reared, he applied himself to degrade them, and exhaust their strength in every vile occupation that can blunt the intellect, and dull the finer sense. But they still multiplied.

The last and terrible resource of king and people, banded together to exterminate those whose crime consisted in being of a different stock, and worshiping the one true God, was to enact and execute a law condemning to a bondage worse than death the Hebrew women and maidens, and slaying at their very birth all male children born throughout the land.

Thus with the male generation wasted beneath the pitiless Egyptian yoke, Pharao had determined that God's people should expire. Not a single son of Abraham should be left on Egyptian soil to propagate the line to whom Abraham's God had promised world-wide rule and influence, and undying fame.

Egyptian men are plying the whip on Hebrew shoulders at Thebes and Memphis, at Abydos and Syene and Ipsambul; and Egyptian women are watching near every Hebrew homestead the birth of every male child, to consign it forthwith to destruction. Pharao's plans are working with the fatal precision and certainty that bode a speedy end to their work. Come forth, then, oh, little maid, thy brother's guardian and savior, and let us worship in thee the feeble instrument of Infinite Wisdom and Power!

"Pharao charged all his people, saying, Whatsoever shall be

born of the male sex, ye shall cast into the river; whatsoever of the female, ye shall save alive."

We are in the outskirts of Memphis the Magnificent, the capital of Lower Egypt; and the broad Nile at our feet is pouring toward the sea the waters that have reflected on their broad bosom all the glories of Thebes and of a hundred other cities then filled with wealth and beauty and sin and misery, and which have not even left a name or a ruin behind. A Hebrew mother has just placed among the tall sedge on the shore a basket made of bulrushes, "daubed with slime and pitch," and containing "a little babe." God, who alone can fathom a mother's love, alone can tell of the agony with which the mother clasped that infant to her breast before she could place it in the frail skiff, and look into its face the last time, and then hurry away beneath the fast disappearing stars, lest the watchful Egyptian spies should see her tears, and discover her hidden treasure.

During "three months" had this daughter of Levi concealed from the enemy her beautiful boy; for his beauty was a something divine: but, longer concealment becoming impossible, she had trusted him to the dark waters, mingling her tears with them, and praying them to be more merciful than the hearts of men. But crouching among the grasses and shadows of the bank watched "his sister" Miriam, a child of some ten summers, made wise beyond her years by suffering and adversity, and wiser still by the infusion of prophetic light, such as was afterward vouchsafed to Samuel. While she kept her eye fixed on the tiny ark, the last star went out overhead, like the last outlying sentry of the bright hosts of heaven withdrawing to report to the Lord of hosts on high; and the glorious eastern dawn poured in succession all its splendors over earth and sky, over river and city, while the child never faltered in her vigilance, and her little heart throbbed with somewhat of a second mother's anxiety for the safety of him who was to be, after God, the sole, great, absorbing love of her life.

"Behold the daughter of Pharao came down to wash herself in the river; and her maids walked by the river's brink. And, when she saw the basket in the sedges, she sent one of her maids

for it; and when it was brought she opened it, and seeing within it an infant crying, having compassion on it, she said, This is one of the babes of the Hebrews. And the child's sister said to her, Shall I go and call to thee a Hebrew woman to nurse the babe? She answered, Go. The maid went and called her mother."

We may pass over in silence the rapture and gratitude of that mother, as well as Miriam's exultation. The babe, named at first Joachim by his father, was now called Moushe ("drawn out of the water"), or Moses, by his adopted mother. He is left to the united tenderness of parental and sisterly love to rear him, and call forth all the powers of mind and heart in him, till the day when his protectress shall take him to her palace. There he has for playmate an elder brother, Aaron, either born before the cruel law of extermination was enacted, or saved by a kindred artifice, through the precocious wisdom of the same Miriam. Be that as it may, both brothers grew up most tenderly attached to each other, and devoted with an almost filial veneration to their heroic sister.

Their three names are inseparably united in the grateful remembrance of Hebrews and Christians alike, as they were by God himself in the mission of liberation jointly intrusted to them: "I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and delivered thee out of the house of slaves; and I sent before thy face Moses and Aaron and Mary (Miriam)" (Mich. vi. 4).

The mental and moral culture that Moses received during his childhood and boyhood imparted to his national feelings and religious convictions the adamantine consistency characteristic of his whole career.

Even when transferred to the care of the Princess Thermutis, his adopted mother, and "educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and when launched in public life, showing himself "mighty in words and deeds" (Acts vii. 22), it is no stretch of probability to assume that Miriam found a way to ingratiate herself with their royal protectress, and thus never lose sight of her brother. Meanwhile, oppression held on its iron way, crushing all resistance beneath its cold, pitiless wheels. But God daily raised higher and higher within the hearts of brother and sister

the living trust in his name, hope in his timely aid, love for the despised faith and down-trodden race, and hatred of the fell oppressor.

The historian Josephus and others supply many details, omitted in the Bible, on the early manhood of Moses. He had been successful as the leader of a great military expedition to Ethiopia, and had incurred the suspicion and jealousy of the king, both by his success, and by his open avowal of his faith, when he is placed before us in the narrative of Exodus, as resenting the cruelty practiced toward the Hebrew laborers, and slaying one of the most tyrannical of the overseers.

Then follows his flight into the interior of the Sinaitic peninsula, his exile of forty years there, his long mourning over the fate of his kinsmen in Egypt, his constant communing with God in prayer, and his mission to return, and bring forth Israel free.

But what of Miriam all this time? She, too, was one of "the three deliverers." She was now in her ninetieth year; and, though Josephus mentions the tradition of her marriage with Hur, the Scriptures are silent on that point; while the general opinion among the early commentators on the Pentateuch affirms that she lived and died unmarried. Thus she was the forerunner of these legions of holy souls, who, under the new law, were to make the virginal life the fertile source of so much supernatural virtue, and such countless social blessings.

Every thing recorded of Miriam in Holy Writ authorizes the assurance that the eighty years elapsed since the day she stood among the sedges of the Nile, watching over the floating thing that contained God's choicest treasure on earth, were employed by her to good purpose in keeping faith and hope alive in the souls of her people.

What influence more safe and more potent than that of a true-hearted woman, solely devoted to God's dearest interests, and moving silently, like the vital light and warmth, through the cottages of the sick and poor, and the serried ranks of the over-taxed sons and daughters of toil? We have seen, in our day, as every Christian generation has, lowly, simple-hearted women who become so filled with the Divine Spirit, that to see them, to

come near them, to touch the hem of their garment, or hear the sound of their voice, is to find one's self lifted above earth, and irresistibly impelled toward all that is good and holy and exalting.

Who can estimate the amount of good done by Miriam in her lovely springtide, in the full grace of her womanhood, in the beautiful maturity of her patriarchal years, as she went unceasingly about, consoling, assisting, instructing, and inspiring the drooping and heart-crushed thousands of Israel in bondage? One can not approach an overcharged electric-receiver without feeling a commotion; and as that earnest woman sped, day after day, during all these fearful years, delivering her message to the Hebrew slave-gangs at their work, did not a virtue go forth from her as she passed, even when she spoke not, and thrill these weary souls to their very life-centers with the thought of God and his coming redemption?

The day of redemption has dawned at last. There stand Moses and Aaron and Miriam before the throne of Pharao Meren-Phthah! It was a long struggle between a nation that worshiped only might, and these representatives of an enslaved race and a religion looked upon with loathing. Nowhere in the annals of humanity can any thing be found approaching in appalling grandeur to the alternate displays of almighty power through Moses and Aaron, and savage ferocity on the part of Pharao and his people. It is the blind, unyielding appetite of the beast of prey, that will not let go its hold of its mangled victim, though the hunter inflict a hundred wounds, each more fearful than the other.

Listen to the awful solemnity of the first message delivered by the prophet to Pharao in God's own words: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, my first-born. I have said to thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me, and thou wouldst not let him go: behold, I will kill thy son, thy first-born." Not before the avenging hand had executed this last terrible threat, and the first-born in every household, from the king's palace to the hut of the lowest Egyptian who could wield a whip to strike the Hebrew bondsman, or use his tongue to deride him and blas-

pheme his God, lay a corpse beneath his parent's eyes, did Israel go forth free from that accursed land.

We are given an insight into the part played by Miriam during these soul-stirring days, from two incidents mentioned in sacred history: her leading the chorus of women in the hymn of thanksgiving sung after the passage of the Red Sea, and her punishment for murmuring against Moses, a short time before her death.

The last Hebrew, ascending from the miraculous pathway opened through the Red Sea to the fugitive millions, has set his foot on Arabian soil; and the last man of Pharao's pursuing host has gone down between the suspended walls of water, when Israel, freed, and kneeling in prayer upon the shore, beholds the crowning wonder of God's might. All that night, the march of the fleeing multitude had continued along these depths, with "the water as a wall on their right hand and on their left. . . . And now the morning watch was come, and behold the Lord, looking upon the Egyptian army through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, slew their host. . . . And the Lord said to Moses, Stretch forth thy hand over the sea. . . . And, when Moses had stretched forth his hand toward the sea, it returned at the first break of day to the former place. . . . And they saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore, and the mighty hand that the Lord had used against them: and the people feared the Lord, and they believed the Lord and Moses his servant."

Rest you at last, O weary ones! The pursuer can reach you no more: the taskmaster can never again urge you early and late to impossible labor: never again shall you crouch beneath the whip, the curse, and the jeer. Oh, what a sabbath that is, beneath the shadow of these frowning Arabian mountains, with the blue waves playing so peacefully at the feet of the adoring multitude, as if they did homage to the favorites of the great Creator of sea and land!

"So Mary the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went forth after her with timbrels and with dances. And she began the song to them, saying, Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously magnified: the horse and its rider he hath thrown into the sea."

We may contemplate the spectacle now. The first overwhelming emotions of terror and joy have subsided in the delivered multitude, like the waves of yonder ocean, now resuming their calm aspect after the whirlwind and the destruction; the long lines of women and maidens coming forth in glittering procession, decked with the rich robes of Egypt, and led by her whom all follow, and acclaim as their mother and part-deliverer; and the men, young and old, ranged in order around Moses and Aaron. Hear Miriam's inspired voice as she sings each verse, and the women repeat it with accompaniment of harp and timbrel, and then Moses and the men take it up, and the anthem peals forth over the waters to the distant Egyptian shore, verse succeeding to verse, and choir answering choir, and the solid earth stirred by song so divine, that its like was never heard before or afterward. Ay, sing ye to the Lord; for thenceforth no such display of power shall glorify his name, till the true Moses stretch forth his hands on Calvary.

Miriam's position at the head of the nation is thus well defined. She shares the solicitude and labors of her brothers through all the years that intervene till they reach the frontier of the promised land. She is not mentioned in connection with the worship of the golden calf, and Aaron's lamentable weakness. Every thing mentioned of her would, on the contrary, go to prove that hers was not a temper to yield to the cries of a sensual and idolatrous multitude. She would rather have shared or inspired the righteous indignation of Moses, when his wrath led him to break the tables on which the law was written.

Indeed, in Num. xii., Miriam's ascendency over Aaron induces him to join her in open revolt against Moses, and that for what she takes as a violation of the law forbidding marriage with strange or unbelieving women. Sephorah, the wife of Moses, was a Midianite, from the idolatrous Cushite race that peopled Western Arabia and the opposite coast of Ethiopia. It was not a mere private expostulation with Moses as to the sinfulness of his conduct in marrying Jethro's daughter, or to the probable effect of his example on his people. The complaint was laid before the people, and the very authority wielded by Moses,

derived immediately from God, and confirmed by the sanction of so many miracles, was now challenged. "Hath the Lord spoken by Moses only? Hath he not also spoken to us in like manner?" The scandal was thus extreme, because of its very publicity and of its authors. "And when the Lord heard this (for Moses was a man exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon the earth), immediately he spoke to him and to Aaron, and to Mary: Come out, you three only, to the tabernacle of the covenant. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the entry of the tabernacle, calling to Aaron and Mary. . . . Why were you not afraid to speak ill of my servant Moses? And, being angry with them, he went away; and the cloud that was over the tabernacle departed. And behold Mary appeared white as snow with a leprosy." She was the chief offender, the senior of both her brothers, looked up to by them as a second mother, looked up to as a mother by the whole nation; and she had, besides, been honored with a dignity and gifts that raised her far above all living women. It is for persons so honored of God, and so looked up to by the multitude, to give to others the example of submission to superior authority, even when obedience may be in opposition to their own private judgment. It is from persons so gifted, and raised so high, that the crowd have a right to expect prudence and reserve in criticising the conduct of even the lowliest in the community, and, above all, charity in construing favorably what may seem blameworthy.

The brothers are heart-stricken at the sight of their sister's fall and open disgrace. Aaron first pleads with Moses, "I beseech thee, my lord, lay not upon us this sin, which we have foolishly committed. Let her not be as one dead. . . . Lo, now one-half of her flesh is consumed with the leprosy. And Moses cried to the Lord, saying, O God, I beseech thee heal her." But great reparation is due for sin committed in so high a place, and against the leader of God's people; and the answer is, "Let her be separated seven days without the camp, and afterwards she shall be called again." "Mary, therefore, was put out of the camp seven days; and the people moved not from that place until Mary was called again." There is one beautiful lesson to

be learned here, that the single blemish of that perfect life of one hundred and thirty years, and the public humiliation with which it was punished, did not diminish in the bosoms of a grateful people the veneration due, and so spontaneously paid, to all the shining virtues and services of their prophetess and parent. Nor is it less touching to reflect that her humiliation did not make Miriam either pusillanimous or peevish. When she "was called again" to her post beside her godlike brother, and at the head of her people, she showed, we may well believe it, tenfold zeal for the divine honor, for the moral improvement of her people, and for the fulfillment of every public and private duty.

Her one recorded sin was committed at Haseroth, near the southern frontier of Chanaan. With the beginning of the fortieth and last year of the people's wanderings, she died at Cades, in the desert of Sin, four months before Aaron, and eleven months before Moses. Her work was done, her mission ended. She was born amid an enslaved people: she took a glorious part in freeing them. She left them a victorious nation at the very gates of the homestead divinely promised to them. The brothers, over whose infancy, boyhood, and manhood she had watched with more than a sister's devotedness, looked down upon her in her latest hour. Some rays of the light which ever encircled the brows of Moses may have then shone also upon her virginal brow as a pledge of the eternal crown near at hand. Perhaps, as the weeping women and maidens of Israel surrounded her death-bed, they all caught up together the triumphant strain, "Let us sing to the Lord; for he is gloriously magnified. . . . In thy mercy thou hast been a leader to the people which thou hast redeemed; and in thy strength thou hast carried them to thy holy habitation. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thy inheritance, . . . thy sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. *Dominus regnabit in æternum et ultra.*" Oh, what a mission and what a reward!

VI.

Debbora, Prophetess and Judge of Israel.

DURING the centuries that intervened between Moses and David, the Hebrew nation sadly needed such women as Miriam. The deplorable proneness to sensual indulgence, and thereby to the gross nature-worship that pervaded all the surrounding races, had already contaminated some of the sons of Jacob when they went down to Egypt. This plague-spot had increased and become inveterate there, and was one cause of God's permitting his people to be so severely scourged by the Egyptians. It had clung to them even when they passed the Red Sea, and was but too manifest in the idolatrous orgies celebrated at the very foot of Mount Sinai.

God, speaking through Josue at Sîchem, to the assembled nation, when the promised territory had been divided among the tribes, thus upbraids them with their infidelity: "I gave you a land in which you had not labored, and cities to dwell in which you built not, vineyards and oliveyards which you planted not. Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him with a perfect and most sincere heart, and put away the gods which your fathers served in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, and serve the Lord." So general does the practice of idol-worship seem to have become among the fickle multitude, that Josue solemnly challenged them to choose between the true God and the gods of the nations. "God forbid," the people answered, "we should leave the Lord, and serve strange gods. . . . And Josue said, . . . You will not be able to serve the Lord; for he is a holy God.

. . . If you . . . serve strange gods, he will turn and afflict you, and will destroy you after all the good he hath done you" (Josue xxiv.).

After Josue's death, idolatry and its attendant vices overflowed the land like a swollen river suddenly bursting the dikes that restrained it. Thrice during the hundred and thirty years immediately following that event, did Israel lapse into the service of Baal and Ashtaroth, and the political bondage consequent upon their guilt; and as often did God raise up heroic souls to deliver them from the shame of this double yoke. Of these deliverers, two were, like Josue himself, descended from Rachel: one was Aod the Benjamite; and the other, Debbora probably, was a daughter of Ephraim.

The name of this illustrious woman signifies "bee." The bee was, among the ancients, the accepted symbol of wisdom: it also represented purity of life, industry, thrift, and forethought. All these qualities, with others nobler still, were combined in Debbora.

She was married, her husband's name being Lapidoth; but her children are not mentioned by name, because, apparently, the details of her private life are forgotten in the light of her splendid public services. She dwelt not far from the boundary-line separating the territories of Benjamin and Ephraim. The great limestone masses that lie between Jerusalem and the plains of Galilee, and vaguely designated as "Mount Ephraim," were not then, as now, denuded of vegetation. They were clad with verdure to the summit; and with the oaks and other forest trees that covered their slopes were mixed groups of palms in the valleys. A grove of these formed the chief feature of Debbora's place of abode, where "she sat under a palm-tree which was called by her name, between Rama and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for all judgment." The old Jewish commentators designated the spot as Ataroth-Debbora; and modern geographers identify it with Atâra, a village in a sultry valley a few miles north of Er-Râm, the Rama of Benjamin, the Ramatha where Samuel was born, and the Arimathæa, probably, of the gospel. In that beautiful spot, before upland and

lowlands had been blighted by war and misrule, on the great highway between the northern and southern tribes, Debbora held her patriarchal court, accessible to all.

The reputation for exalted ability and supernatural virtue stamped her in the eyes of the people as their counselor in every difficulty, their judge in all contentions, and their acknowledged guide in great emergencies.

The Hebrew commonwealth was intended to be a republic of confederated tribes, governed by God himself through the agency of men, like Moses and Josue, specially called and commissioned by him. But in that age of enervation, unfaithfulness, and premature decadence, the true men were few on whom could descend the charge intrusted to the great lawgiver and his warlike successor. Indeed, one might say, without great injustice, that the Israelitic republic, in the days of Debbora, counted scarcely one true man within her borders, so utterly did the masculine qualities of composing public quarrels, organizing and directing armies, and planning the liberation of the national territory from foreign rule, seem to have been left to a single woman. And yet these were days when Israel needed the great mind of Moses, and the strong arm of Josue, to restore and to complete their work of creating a free people within an independent territory.

"The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord after the death of Aod. And the Lord delivered them up into the hands of Jabin, king of Chanaan, who reigned in Asor; and he had a general of his army named Sisara, who dwelt in Haroseth of the Gentiles."

Thus the abominable Baal-worship, which polluted all Northern and Eastern Palestine, and filled with its temples, and desecrated with its rites, the lovely valleys of Cœle-Syria and the very hills from which the Jordan springs, had once more enslaved the Hebrews. The very names of the cities where the Chanaanite tyrant, and his cruel general, Sisara, held their sway, mark their sites at present, as do, indeed, the names of the other places mentioned in the story of Debbora. What the laws and principles were that governed both king and general in their raids among

the subject tribes, we can gather from the passage where Sisara's mother looks out from her stronghold at Haroseth, midway on the hills that overlook from the west the marshy Lake of Merom, and the Sea of Galilee: "His mother looked out at a window . . . Why is his chariot so long in coming back? Why are the feet of his horses so slow? One that was wiser than the rest of his wives returned this answer to her mother-in-law: Perhaps he is now dividing the spoils, and the fairest of the women is chosen out for him."

The policy that dictated to Pharao and his pursuing hosts the cruel cry, "I will pursue, . . . I will divide the spoils; my soul shall have its fill. I will draw my sword: my hand shall slay them," is the same among Chanaanites and Phœnicians, akin to the Egyptians in blood and religion, and, like them, the deadly foes of Israel. Woe to the Hebrews vanquished in battle: for them the sword shall have no mercy. But far worse shall be the fate of the Hebrew women.

For twenty years had the unsparing hand of Jabin, and his chief instrument, Sisara, been heavy upon Northern Palestine, upon that Galilee made unspeakably dear to us, as the future abode, for thirty years, of the God of our hearts. The least grievous of the many ills with which the tyrants afflicted the land did not consist in sweeping away the herds or the ripe harvest, or cutting down ripe manhood like grass, but in carrying away into hopeless captivity and lifelong dishonor the women, with the youths and children of both sexes.

There is no man who reads these lines, and knows what was the contemporary idolatry of Tyre and Sidon and Byblos (and Asor as well), and what the fate of these innocents, that will not feel the curse coming unbidden to his lips.

At length, amid the intolerable oppression thus brought home to every Hebrew hearth and heart, "the children of Israel cried to the Lord." A new foray for plunder and for slaves had been set on foot by Sisara at his master's command. "For he had nine hundred chariots set with scythes;" and Josephus enumerates his vast host of infantry and cavalry.

But God will not fail his people in their extreme peril. Deb-

bora has come to her judgment-seat beneath the palm-tree. "And she sent and called Barac, the son of Abinoem, out of Cedes (Kedesh) in Nephthali; and she said to him, The Lord God of Israel hath commanded thee: *Go and lead an army to Mount Thabor, and thou shalt take with thee ten thousand fighting-men of the children of Nephthali and of the children of Zabulon; and I will bring unto thee, in the place of the torrent of Cison* (Kishon), *Sisara, the general of Jabin's army, and his chariots, and all his multitude, and will deliver them into thy hand.*"

Such was the inspired message delivered from her seat of authority by her who was "Mother in Israel," the acknowledged organ of God's will.

Ordinary natural prudence might well question the feasibility of collecting ten thousand warriors, equipped for the field, from the two northernmost tribes, hemmed in on every side by the all-powerful foe, and among whose hills Jabin and Sisara had established their central garrisons. And if the ten thousand could be got together, and armed with due secrecy, how could such a large body be led with all possible dispatch and safety through the enemies' lines, and to the appointed place of rendezvous on Thabor? Thus prudence would reason.

But among God's people, with the memory of past wonders, and the pressure of present calamity, before the mind, there was another element to be weighed before and above all other considerations, Had God spoken? If so, then faith, immediate, unreasoning, and absolute, must be reposed in his command. His injunctions must be blindly executed forthwith, trusting to his irresistible power to achieve the promised result when and where he had appointed.

This should have been the decision of the true Israelite. And it was here that the chosen leader of the liberating army betrayed a lamentable want of faith, and a pusillanimity that was in striking contrast with the straightforward and resolute spirit of the woman who delivered the divine message.

"And Barac said to her, If thou wilt come with me, I will go: if thou wilt not come with me, I will not go. She said to him, I will go indeed with thee. But at this time the victory shall

not be attributed to thee, because Sisara shall be delivered into the hand of a woman. Debbora therefore arose, and went with Barac to Cedes (Kedesh, a little to the north-east of Lake Merom)."

It is inspiriting to follow in thought the intrepid woman, as she accompanies the doubting and timorous Barac into the very country where the enemy seems to be omnipresent. She fires the downcast and despairing with the martial spirit that burns within her own breast; she infuses her own unquestioning faith into these souls, whose religion has been dimmed amid heathen darkness, and whose trust in the God of Israel has yielded to the unremedied wrongs of years; the halo round her brow, the light in her eye, the electric warmth of her every word, kindle an enthusiasm that spreads from hill to hill, and valley to valley, till she finds herself at the head of an army. From several passages in her triumphal song, we can gather that she appealed in vain to the southern tribes. The tribes of Issachar, Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasses, Zabulon, and Nephthali alone furnished contingents; Aser on the seacoast, and Dan beyond the Jordan, taking no part in the action.

She led her little army by the least frequented passages to the broad, level top of Mount Thabor, whence she commanded a view of the fertile valleys of Galilee, and of the plain of Esdraelon, stretching to the south and west, from the Jordan to the sea. There below, at its southern extremity, where the city of Megiddo stood, she could point out to Barac the spot foreshown, on which he was to triumph over Sisara.

"And it was told Sisara that Barac the son of Abinoem was gone up to Mount Thabor; and he gathered together his nine hundred chariots armed with scythes, and all his army from Haroseth of the Gentiles to the torrent Cison."

We may dwell in spirit on the mighty array of horse and foot, and glittering chariots, as they cover the plain, surrounding the mountain so as to hem in the little army of patriot rebels. The hunter thinks that he has spread his toils so cunningly, that his prey can not now escape. It will be at best but the hopeless, heroic struggle of a few ill-armed and undisciplined thousands against a host inured to battle, and accustomed to victory.

"And Debbora said to Barac, Arise, for this is the day wherein the Lord hath delivered Sisara into thy hands: behold, he is thy leader."

How the devoted "ten thousand," kneeling on that same mountain-top which was to witness the glories of the Transfiguration, raised hands and hearts to the God of battles, as they caught the inspired ardor of her who stood there the impersonation of country, freedom, and religion! And, that God blessed them, the issue soon told.

Down they pour in one serried mass, Barac at their head, and Debbora in their midst, with the resistless rush of a mountain torrent. Heaven fought with them visibly. A fearful storm burst on the embattled host below, wind and rain and hail driving fiercely into the faces of the Chanaanites, blinding and maddening the horses, that fled from the fury of the gale, breaking and overturning the solid array of infantry, and presenting to the advancing Hebrews but chaotic, panic-stricken multitudes of fugitives.

The very numbers of the enemy only add to the fatal disorder of the rout. One wing of their army rush headlong toward Megiddon, trampling each other under foot, and seeking to place the swollen and rapid river between themselves and the preternatural terrors of the pursuit: the other, on the north, fly along the mountain-passes toward Haroseth; while Barac and the swords of Nephthali and Zabulon flash in the rear more terrible than the red lightnings of heaven.

But what of Sisara? His tragic end is but an episode in this first of a series of victories that end in the annihilation of Jabin's power, and the utter destruction of his very capital.

Sisara, appalled at the visible interposition of Heaven in favor of the Israelites, and, like every voluptuary and tyrant, craven-hearted in presence of death or defeat, had abandoned his war-chariot at the approach of the victorious general, and concealed himself on foot among the flying masses. Far from the battle-field, weary and faint, he came upon the camp of Haber the Cinite (Kenite), a kinsman of Moses by marriage, and whose tribe had been adopted into the Hebrew nation. Haber's time-

serving policy had made him a friend of Jabin's, and prevented his aiding Israel in the hour of their direst need. But his wife Jahel, like a true woman, resented the wrongs of her nation, and the outrages committed and contemplated on her countrywomen by the pitiless hordes of Sisara.

"And Jahel went forth to meet Sisara, and said to him, Come in to me, my lord: come in, fear not. He went into her tent, and, being covered by her with a cloak, said to her, Give me, I beseech thee, a little water, for I am very thirsty. She opened a bottle of milk, and gave him to drink, and covered him. And Sisara said to her, Stand before the door of the tent; and when any one shall come and inquire of thee, saying, Is there any man here? thou shalt say, There is none." The tyrant and coward, believing himself in safety, already resumes his tones of command. But Jahel neither promises nor answers. He sleeps, refreshed and strengthened, within one of those very Israelitic homes which he has so often desolated and dishonored. But the avenger is by his side.

"So Jahel, Haber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and taking also a hammer, and going in softly, she put the nail on the temples of his head, and, striking it with the hammer, drove it through his brain fast into the ground."

The warriors of Aser (Asher) had looked on from the summits of the western mountains, fearful of provoking the vengeance of Jabin by casting their fate with their brethren, and insensible to the appeals and promises of Debbora. The men of Dan had taken refuge in their ships and boats on the Lake of Galilee, watching thence the issue of the unequal contest; ready, it may be, to join in the pursuit of the Chanaanites, should Debbora's prophecy prove true, but ready, also, to betake themselves to their native hills, or to the desert beyond, if Barac should be crushed.

Such treacherous neutrality is stigmatized as it deserves, in Debbora's immortal hymn.

When and where occurred the solemnity at which "the Mother of Israel" uttered, like Miriam on the shore of the Red Sea, this inspired triumphal chant? Doubtless, once the utter defeat of Sisara had been noised throughout the land, and the subsequent

annihilation of Jabin's power had become an accomplished fact, the tribes of Israel speedily met to express their gratitude to their divine protector, their veneration for their prophetess and leader, and their congratulations toward the noble army and its chief.

Was it on Thabor, whence Barac descended like a thunderbolt on the foe? or near the grave of Joseph at Sichem, and in the territory of Ephraim? or in Debbora's own home, around the palm-tree that shaded her judgment-seat? But whether on Thabor's brow, or in Sichem, the paradise of Palestine, there is not a line in Debbora's sublime strain, that does not suppose the presence of all Israel, of the recreant tribes that peremptorily refused to join her standard, of the timid who vacillated to the end between fear and duty, and of the noble few who put themselves fearlessly in God's hand.

There is no need of a stretch of the imagination to picture this national thanksgiving, the solemn sacrifice, and then the double choir of women with Debbora and Jahel, and of men with Barac and his warriors.

"O you of Israel, that have willingly offered your lives to danger, bless the Lord.

"Hear, O ye kings, give ear, ye princes: It is I, it is I, that will sing to the Lord, I will sing to the Lord, the God of Israel."

No feeling of vanity or self-laudation is apparent here: it is a timid woman who wishes to point out the similarity between the recent display of divine power in selecting her as an instrument, and the means used by God of old to bring his people from Egypt into this same land. When he advanced in pillar and cloud at the head of his people, through the paths leading from Mount Sinai, through Idumæa, "Mount Seir," and "the regions of Edom," "the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped water. The mountains melted before the face of the Lord, the Lord God of Israel."

But, once in secure possession of the promised land, Israel forgot the prodigies of might by which its conquest had been achieved, and their enemies partially annihilated. Security

begot supineness; and forgetfulness of the Divine Mercy was followed by self-indulgence, effeminacy, idol-worship, and the ascendency of a foreign foe.

From "the days of Samgar," who, single handed, and leaving the plow for the sword, broke the foreign yoke, to "the days of Jahel," the currents of national life ceased to flow, and the national heart beat no longer for Jehovah and liberty.

"The paths rested, and they that went by them walked through by-ways.

"The valiant men ceased . . . in Israel. . . . A shield and a spear was not seen among forty thousand of Israel.

"Until Debbora arose, a mother arose in Israel. The Lord [then] chose new wars [new methods of warfare], and he himself overthrew the gates of the enemies.

"My heart loveth the princes of Israel. O you that of your own good will offered yourselves to danger, bless ye the Lord."

Ay, the spectacle beheld in the present solemn assembly, contrasted with the degradation and servitude from which they have just emerged, may well fill their hearts with thanks, and their lips with praise. But a short time ago, chiefs and people came by stealth in the night, and through by-ways, to seek Debbora's judgment. Now, on the contrary, —

"Speak, you that ride upon fair asses, and you that sit [with me] in judgment, and walk [in triumph] in the way.

"Where the chariots were dashed together, and the army of the enemies was choked, there let the justices [just vengeance] of the Lord be rehearsed, and his clemency toward the just men of Israel."

On their return from this solemn assemblage, there is not a road that leads to their homes, but has witnessed the triumph of God's people in the late battles, by the annihilation of some part of the tyrant's forces. *There* let them publicly recite God's judgments on the wicked, and his unspeakable goodness to his own; for the invader came to make his yoke heavier on our necks, and bringing chains for fresh captives. The affrighted Hebrews shut themselves up within their walls, or the secret

places of their homes, as the foemen's countless host swept by. But soon —

"The people of the Lord went down to the gates, and obtained the sovereignty.

"Arise, arise, O Debbora, arise, arise, and utter a canticle. Arise, Barac! and take hold of thy captives, O son of Abinoem.

"The remnants of the people are saved: the Lord hath fought among the valiant ones."

Here follows an enumeration of the tribes present in the conflict for freedom: Ephraim, Nephtali, Manasses, and Zabulon, whose sons pursued the scattered bands of the enemy beyond their own frontiers, and into the land of the Amalekites.

"The captains of Issachar were with Debbora, and followed the steps of Barac, who exposed himself to danger as one going headlong, and into a pit."

But the recreant tribes receive their meed of scorn.

"Ruben being divided against himself, there was found a strife of courageous [?] men. Why dwellest thou between two borders [is it] that thou mayst hear the bleatings of the flocks? Ruben being divided against himself, there was found a strife of courageous men.

"Galaad rested beyond the Jordan, and Dan applied himself to ships. Aser dwelt on the seashore, and abode in the havens.

"But Zabulon and Nephtali offered their lives to death in the region of Merome. . . .

"Curse ye the land of Meroz, said the angel of the Lord: curse the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to help his most valiant men."

After this solemn censure of the absent tribes, we are startled by the fierce accents of this terrific curse on Meroz, and the public excommunication of its inhabitants. But, —

"Blessed among women be Jahel, the wife of Haber the Cinite, and blessed be she in her tent. . . .

"So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love thee shine, as the sun shineth in his rising."

Before the heroic figure of Debbora, and this hymn, — the most ancient unquestionably ascribed to a woman, — we may pause

a moment in silent admiration; like the traveler over the Eastern historic plains, who comes suddenly upon a gigantic monolith bearing the solitary image of some female sovereign, some heroine whose name and deeds are recorded in mysterious and fragmentary characters on the monument before him. The earth, from horizon to horizon, is strewn with the wreck of empires and the dust of nations; but there stands that solitary stone, preserving to all future time the lineaments of a God-sent woman, and the memory of her deathless deeds.

"And the land rested for forty years," after the deliverance achieved by Debbora.

VII.

Jephte's Daughter.

SCARCELY had a century elapsed after Debbora's great victory, when the people whom she had ruled and freed were plunged into a more shameful idolatry, and vexed by a foreign domination more intolerable, if any thing, than the former. "The children of Israel, adding new sins to their old ones, did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served idols, Baalim and Astaroth, and the gods of Syria, and of Sidon, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines. . . . And the Lord, being angry with them, delivered them into the hands of the Philistines and of the children of Ammon. And they were afflicted and grievously oppressed for eighteen years, all they that dwelt beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorrhite, who is in Galaad: insomuch that the children of Ammon, passing over the Jordan, wasted Juda and Benjamin and Ephraim: and Israel was distressed exceedingly."

In the midnight darkness of this moral and social misery, the figures of a father and his daughter, an only child, shine forth as the providential agents of restoration.

Jephte, the son of a distinguished Hebrew named Galaad, living in the territory of that name, had had for mother a stranger to the tribe, an inferior wife. He grew up a youth of uncommon military promise, and appears, moreover, to have remained faithful to the true God, despite his mother's foreign blood, and the general apostasy of his tribesmen. But these very qualities, instead of commending him to his other brothers, the sons of the prin-

cipal wife, and to his countrymen, only caused him to be expelled ignominiously from his father's house and native soil.

The fame he acquired by his exploits in exile, and his surpassing ability as a commander, caused the Galaadites in their sore distress, and probably at the request of the neighboring tribes across the Jordan, to solicit Jephte by deputation to return, and take the lead of his countrymen.

He consented only after a solemn covenant, ratified on both sides at Maspha (or Mizpah), a frontier town of Galaad, strongly fortified. Here he placed forthwith his only daughter, Salome, and established his residence temporarily. This town was, at the time, threatened by a formidable army of Ammonites and their allies. After a fruitless appeal for peace to their leaders, and for aid to the adjacent tribe of Ephraim, Jephte, urged by "the spirit of the Lord," sped through the territories of Manasses and his own native Galaad, summoning the Israelites to arms. Whatever may have been the number of his followers, it would seem they were but few as compared to the enemy. In his perplexity, to give fresh courage to his troops, or to sustain his own confidence against such fearful odds, the rude and unenlightened piety of the wild borderer made him vow publicly to the Lord: "If thou wilt deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, whosoever shall first come forth out of the doors of my house, and shall meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, the same will I offer a holocaust to the Lord."

He had not learned, or had forgotten, the simple and sublime faith of Debbora, and the childlike obedience of Barac, when, with his handful of men, he rushed down from the summit of Thabor, to what appeared certain destruction. The spirit that had sustained Jephte while appealing to his countrymen and organizing his little army, gives way to trepidation in presence of so superior an enemy. Thus the rash and impious vow is made. The victory was secure without it: success crowns his arms in spite of it. The Ammonites were routed with fearful slaughter; and twenty of their cities fell before the Israelites, who wasted their country, and returned, flushed with this unexpected success, to the sanctuary of Maspha.

At their approach, the time-honored custom was observed: the women and maidens assembled to greet the victor with song and dance and solemn procession. They are waiting for Jephte and his chiefs at the house of the former; and when the now unconscious general appears near his own door, lo! Salome, with timbrel in hand, sallies forth at the head of her country-women.

Unhappy father! "And, when he saw her, he rent his garments, and said, Alas! my daughter, thou hast deceived me, and thou thyself art deceived; for I have opened my mouth [made a vow] to the Lord, and I can do no other thing."

Of the many men, eminent alike for learning and holiness, who have discussed from age to age the questions of Jephte's guilt in executing his impious vow, and of his daughter's having been really slain in sacrifice, or merely consecrated to God by a life of perpetual seclusion and virginity, it were idle to give the names, or state the opinions here.

Certain it is that the greatest weight of authority, both among Christians and Hebrews, unhesitatingly says that Jephte consummated the horrible holocaust in its obvious and literal meaning. But whatever justification may be discovered in the ignorance of a man trained in desert warfare, and surrounded by the sanguinary worshipers of Moloch, or in a certain good faith arising from such an education, we may well turn from him and his motives, to his child.

Isaac alone, in the unreasoning and spontaneous obedience with which he accepted the divine decree, and helped to build the altar on which he believed his young life was to be spilled out, can be compared with the Virgin of Maspha. Indeed both, in their spotless youth, typified Him who was to offer himself up as a victim undefiled for both sexes and the guilt of all humanity.

We can give the lovely maiden, then, our hearty and unqualified admiration. She sees her father victorious, her country free, and their enemies annihilated. It is God's work. She does not stop to consider whether or not her parent's promise contributed to the success of his arms. She deems his honor involved in its accomplishment.

Has he not been all in all to her? Born in exile, reared amid the wild scenes of the desert life, she has known till now no home but her father's tent, no bliss but the sweet endearments of his love. The terrible warrior, whose name spread dismay from the Jordan to the Persian Gulf, was to her the tenderest of parents. Their only regret, in her isolated and orphaned condition, was, that they could not dwell in their own Galaad, and see Israel united and independent. This wish and dream of her life had just begun to be realized. She was restored to the sacred soil of her country: the whole land was now echoing the triumphant shouts of freedom. Her father was its liberator, and would thenceforth be its acknowledged chief; and she was there to hail his return with solemn procession, and hymn and dance.

What though she were to be the victim whose blood had been promised and accepted as the price of a country's freedom and a father's glory?

"And she answered him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth to the Lord, do unto me whatsoever thou hast promised, since the victory hath been granted to thee, and revenge of thy enemies. . . . Grant me only this which I desire: Let me go, that I may go about the mountains for two months, and may bewail my virginity with my companions."

Was it during this interval of such agonizing suspense, that Jephte sought a distraction to his grief in quelling the armed sedition in Ephraim? At least, the fearful slaughter in one day, and in cold blood, of forty thousand Ephraimites, by Jephte's orders, gives us the measure of the man's temper. These were exceptional times, in a land disgraced with gigantic and repeated sins; and they may have needed the teaching of such examples.

But let us come back to Maspha and the mountains of Galaad. They daily echoed the chants of Salome and her companions, lamenting the fate of her who was to die in her early bloom, and unwedded, with no hope that from her line one day the Messiah might spring; for such was the thought that then filled the purest hearts in Israel: nay, such, even at this day, is the

hope that is treasured up, and prized above all earth's riches and honors, by so many daughters of exiled Israel.

"And, the two months being expired, she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed. . . . From thence came a fashion in Israel, and a custom has been kept, that, from year to year, the daughters of Israel assemble together, and lament the daughter of Jephte the Galaadite, for four days."

There existed, at the very time of Salome's death, an annual idolatrous feast, having its center at Byblos, a little north of the modern Beiroot, and uniting in its solemnities the populations of the entire Syrian coast, as well as Egypt, and of the interior of Northern Palestine, round to Galaad, and the regions extending to Mesopotamia. It was the death of Tammuz, after whom the month of June was called. He was son to the King of Byblos, beloved of the Syrian goddess Baalath or Ashtaroth, and was killed while hunting on the banks of the modern Nahr Ibrahim, or River Adonis. Each year, when the swollen river bore down from the distant snow-fields of Libanon the red clay of the adjacent soil, the worshipers of Baalath believed it was the blood of her lover that dyed the stream. Along the lovely valleys of the Adonis and the Leontes to the east, from Baalbeck to the sea, every city and hamlet sent forth its crowd of women and maidens, who celebrated in frantic orgies the death of the Phœnician prince. This pollution stained the very head waters of the Jordan, which thus brought to the hearts of God's people the temptations of the neighboring idolatry, and the contagion of its foulest rites.

Greek mythology, in after-ages, threw a thin veil of fancy over these abominations; and Christianity at length exorcised the demons from the land.

Far other are the influences born of the virginal blood of Jephte's daughter, shed, perhaps, in the mountain sanctuary of Maspha, and coming down to us on the sacred stream of revealed teaching. The memories called up by her death, the beautiful virtues that shine forth in that young life, are of priceless worth to the sons and daughters of every land. To us, here in this new world, where liberty needs to be guarded against its own

excesses amid all the blessings it confers, it is most important to recall this example of a filial love and obedience without compare, of a devotion to country that without a murmur yielded life in its first blossom, and of a sublime reverence for promises plighted to God.

It is in the cherishing of such ideals, that humanity purifies and renovates its belief and affections.

VIII.

The Mothers of Samson and Samuel.

THE moral heroism voluntarily practiced in the Old Law, or specially imposed on certain persons by divine command, was a preparation for the practice of the supernatural virtues that adorned the lives of the Founder and saints of the New Law. It is a providential ordinance, clearly written in all the pages of Hebrew and Christian history, that self-denial in some uncommon degree is an absolute condition toward being instrumental in effecting any great good among God's people; in doing God's work, in one word.

He only chooses as his co-operators in promoting the spiritual welfare and supernatural destinies of humanity men and women who are, or seriously strive to be, supernatural in their aims and the whole tenor of their lives.

Abraham, tried by more than a century of suffering and self-denial, heard, just before the renewal of God's covenant with him and his, this injunction: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect." This was to school him still further for a series of trials ending in the command to offer in sacrifice the life of Isaac.

Joseph is the first in Holy Writ on whom was bestowed the appellation of Nazarite, or one "separated" from those around him, and dedicated to God by the practice of special virtues. It would appear that the boy had thus been distinguished from infancy; and his refusing to be contaminated by the unnatural vices of his brethren was one chief cause of their hatred, and his

being sold into bondage. His exalted purity of life drew on him the denunciations of his mistress, and his subsequent imprisonment; but it led, also, to his elevation, and the blessings thence derived to Egypt as well as his own kinsfolk.

Amid the corruptions of the adjoining Paganism, Israel needed the examples of such exceptional men as the Nazarites, whose person and lives were sacred to God, whose every action was intended to be of a nature to proclaim the holiness of their Master; who protested against the prevailing sensuality and intemperance, by refraining from wine and all strong drinks, from so much as eating the grape, or touching it; and who aimed at avoiding so carefully that moral uncleanness that is the death of the soul, that it was defilement for them even to touch involuntarily a dead body.

This rigorous, and to us apparently excessive formality, was absolutely necessary in the times and in the country of Debbora and Jephte. The sublime instances of virtue, as well as the periodical displays of divine power, that mark the republican era of the judges in Israel, produced only momentary or short-lived repentance and reform in the nation. Still the all-seeing Providence, that looked afar into the future for him who was to afford the Expiation of all this guilt, and to be the Exemplar of a new order of virtue, was patient with the erring people, and kept constantly before their eyes some new prophetic representative of the coming Saviour and Sanctifier.

We have two of these illustrious personages in Samson and Samuel, otherwise so unlike in their lives and merits. But it is the divine precept imposed on the mother of each, before the birth of her child, that most nearly and deeply concerns this nineteenth century of ours.

1. The name of Samson's mother has not come down to us; but she lived with her husband, Manue, or Manoah, in Saraa (or Zorah), in the seacoast territory allotted to the tribe of Dan, between the modern Jaffa and Ascalon. Josephus tells us that this lady was as beautiful as her husband was distinguished for virtue and rank among his tribesmen. But they were childless; nor does it seem that their union was disturbed by this, or that they

felt tempted thereby to bring the curse of polygamy into their home.

God rewarded them by making them the parents of one whose deeds were to strike terror into the hearts of the Philistines, their oppressors, and who was to be, in his single-handed might, the lively image of the promised Redeemer.

An angel is sent to announce to the wife that she shall have a son. But mark the injunction: "Now, therefore, beware, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing. Because thou shalt . . . bear a son; and no razor shall touch his head. For he shall be a Nazarite of God from his infancy; . . . and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines." This prediction, when communicated to Manue, made him desirous of fuller knowledge of the Divine Will in all that related to the education and training of the promised child. He prayed that the angel might again visit them to enlighten them more fully. The prayer is answered; and to Manue's queries, the injunction laid on his wife is literally repeated, thus emphasizing its vital importance.

The child is born; and the name Samson (Hebrew, *Shimshon*) bestowed on him, and meaning "little sun," or "sun-like," seemed to foretell the splendor of his brief career.

His special gift was invincible strength; and its possession, attached in general to the scrupulous fulfillment of his Nazarite vows, was especially so to the condition of not allowing razor or scissors to touch his hair.

Thus the mother was bidden to keep her blood from all that could inflame or defile it; and the blood, thus transfused pure, calm, and strong into the heart of the babe, was to be preserved by him in its purity and strength, unimpaired by sensual excess or forbidden indulgence, down to his dying-day.

We have only to follow the rapid race run by Samson to see for ourselves, that so long as he was faithful to the lessons inculcated by such a mother and such a father as he was blessed with, so long as he was true to God's covenant with him, of making victory over every foe, and the achievement of national freedom, dependent on fidelity to the law of abstinence, he was, in his

irresistible power, the glorious image of Almighty God, the hero and idol of Israel.

This heroic spirit of abstinence was in him "the spirit of the Lord," the very soul of his strength.

But when he sets aside, in the over-proud consciousness of his divine calling and his preternatural power, the matrimonial impediments so wisely established by Moses to exclude the admixture of Pagan blood with the race of God's people, and the restraints especially required in professed Nazarites, he becomes the slave of sensuality, the plaything of a day for Philistine women; betrays the secret of his strength again and again, untaught by bitter experience, to the idolatress sworn to ruin him; and is cast, shorn of his strength, blind, helpless, and a degraded slave, into the hands of the very tyrants whose yoke he was divinely commissioned to break.

Thus the arts of a false wife, the fascination of a sacrilegious connection, undo all that the examples of his pure mother had done for that privileged soul in boyhood and youth. Dalila destroys the savior in Israel formed so carefully by the wife of Manue: intemperance, sensual indulgence, paralyzes a power intrusted to the judge of Israel for a design involving the happiness of a whole people. Truly, he alone is strong, he alone is the complete man, who is master, in the house of his own soul, over those slaves that we call appetites.

The parents of Samson, his mother in particular, may have been consoled in the triumph wrought by their son's heroic death: it was, however, only the beginning of the deliverance which he might, if faithful, have achieved in its fullness.

That was to be the work of a contemporary Nazarite, greater far than Samson, because faithful from his birth to his grave.

2. Samuel's mission was to begin by establishing the reign of God, of holiness of life, first in the sanctuary of religion itself, and then among his people. The need of the first reform is best set forth in the words of Scripture: "Now the sons of Heli [the high priest] were children of Belial, not knowing the Lord, nor the office of the priests to the people. . . . Wherefore the sin of the young men was exceeding great before the Lord, because

they withdrew men from the sacrifice of the Lord." The offenders — both the father who could not exert energy enough to stop the scandal, and the sons, who defiled the holy place itself — were destined to a fearful retribution. But our purpose is with Samuel, or, rather, with his mother.

Both his parents, Elcana and Anna, were of the stock of Ephraim. And Anna was childless; while a second wife, blessed with numerous offspring, divided her husband's affections. They were all devoted worshipers of the God of their fathers, and "went upon the appointed days to adore and to offer sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Silo." Phenenna, the rival wife, triumphed over Anna on these solemn occasions, receiving a "portion" of the sacrifice for each of her sons and daughters; while Elcana "to Anna gave one portion with sorrow, because he loved Anna. . . . Her rival also afflicted her, and troubled her exceedingly; . . . and thus she did every year when the time returned."

Humiliated in her womanly pride, Anna, while indulging in secret weeping, had also recourse to prayer. She was strongly moved one feast-day to withdraw to some remote spot, nearer to the "mercy-seat," while the rest of her family were sacrificing; and, with "her heart full of grief, she prayed to the Lord, shedding many tears. And she made a vow, saying, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt look down on the affliction of thy servant, and wilt be mindful of me, and not forget thy handmaid, and wilt give to thy servant a man-child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

While "she multiplied prayers . . . spoke in her heart, and only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard at all," the high priest Heli "observed her mouth," and "thought her to be drunk." Alas! not unfrequently those who judge others most hastily and rashly are but little careful to judge their own actions with needful severity. So he "said to her, How long wilt thou be drunk? digest a little [while] the wine of which thou hast taken too much. Anna, answering, said, Not so, my lord, for I am an exceeding unhappy woman, and have drunk neither wine nor any strong drink; but I have poured out my soul before the

Lord. . . . Then Heli said to her, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition."

So it befell. The "multiplied prayers" were answered; and the child sent to those longing arms was called Samuel, "asked of God." He was to the yearning heart of the mother but a sacred trust: and, when the child was weaned, she hastened to fulfill her vow; and, though it was like tearing away one-half of her soul, she, with her husband, brought him to the tabernacle at Silo, there to give him up to the Lord for ever. It would appear that Heli at first declined to receive one "as yet very young." "And Anna said, I beseech thee, my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am that woman who stood before thee here, praying to the Lord. For this child did I pray; and the Lord hath granted me my petition. . . . Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord all the days of his life."

While she and her husband are prostrate in adoration, and the mother is, perchance, beseeching grace to bear with the loneliness of the home to which she is returning, and which her darling's voice is to gladden no more, the Divine Spirit rushes upon her, disclosing her own and her child's resemblance to another Mother and another Son; and she fills the holy place with this wonderful hymn, prophetic of the alternate humiliations and glories of the Messiah: —

"My heart hath rejoiced in the Lord, and my horn [honor, might] is exalted in my God. My mouth is enlarged over my enemies, because I have joyed in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord is; for there is no other beside thee: and there is none strong like our God. Do not multiply to speak lofty things, boasting: let old matters depart from your mouth; for the Lord is a God of all knowledge, and to him are thoughts prepared. The bow of the mighty is overcome; and the weak are girt with strength. They that were full before have hired out themselves for bread; and the hungry are filled, so that the barren have borne many, and she that had many children is weakened. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to hell [death], and bringeth back again. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he humbleth, and he exalteth. He raiseth up

the needy from the dust, and lifteth up the poor from the dung-hill, that he may sit with princes, and hold the throne of glory. For the poles of the earth are the Lord's, and upon them he hath set the world. He will keep the feet of the saints; and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, because no man shall prevail by his own strength. The adversaries of the Lord shall fear him, and upon them shall he thunder in the heavens. The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and he shall give empire to his king, and shall exalt the horn of his Christ."

Thus exalted herself to the rank of prophetess, this mother went down as if beyond herself with a holy joy after her great sacrifice. But God, who had accepted the integrity of her offering, would not be outdone in generosity. He sent her other children on whom to pour out the riches of a true mother's love, and to rear in the fear of the Lord. Nor did all this prosperity make her proud, or weaken her love for the absent one. With her own hands she wove and made the garments he was permitted to wear in the holy place; "which she brought to him on the appointed days, when she went up with her husband to offer the solemn sacrifice."

She lived in that child of blessing: she had imparted to him, from reason's first dawn, her own earnest spirit of prayer, and it grew thenceforward in him. All Israel believed in his powerful intercession; for prayer became his occupation by day in seasons of great public necessity, and, when distressed by the fear of some impending calamity, all night long "he cried to the Lord."

To the saintly child was intrusted the office of watching by day over the lamp that burned before the Holy of Holies, and of extinguishing or replenishing it by night; being himself the while the burning light that illumined God's house in its darkest hour. He slept there, near the mercy-seat, like Innocence keeping guard over Holiness. To his ear, even then, God committed the terrible messages destined for the unwatchful high priest, and declaring the divine judgments on him and his guilty offspring.

A Nazarite from his birth, Samuel kept his vow till death, but went far beyond the perfection it required. A prophet by God's

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calling, a priest and pontiff by special and exceptional appointment, deliverer, judge, and ruler of his people, he alone made all Israel love God's sway. Had the hands to which, in his extreme old age, he committed his authority, been pure and firm like his own, God would have continued to be the only king in Israel.

But, O mystery of human liberty abused! Samuel's own sons forgot the punishment of Heli and his perverse children, and became perverts in their turn. So Israel forced Samuel, ere he died, to anoint them a king.

Nevertheless, he stands before us, closing a memorable epoch in Hebrew history, as, perhaps, the most complete and beautiful character of the Old Testament, just as Anna strikes us as the sweetest embodiment of all the qualities that belong to the true mother.

IX.

Ruth and Noemi.

THESE names call us back to Bethlehem, to the neighborhood of Rachel's tomb. We have traced her glories in a few of the many illustrious sons and daughters sprung from her line. Indeed, their number is such, that, were Christian crusaders again to attempt to rear a cathedral above her remains, the heroic figures of her descendants might fill every niche in crowded front and lateral porches, and look down upon the land from the finials and crockets of buttress and roof.

But Noemi is a daughter of Juda; and Ruth, though a stranger and a Moabitess, is a link of refined foreign gold connecting an odious race with the house that is to bring forth David, Mary, and the Messiah.

The sweet story of both women belongs to the period of the judges; and both, most probably, were the contemporaries of Anna and the wife of Manue.

A famine, brought on, not unnaturally, by the wars and devastations between Israel and the hostile tribes on its borders, had forced Elimelech of Bethlehem to seek a temporary subsistence in the more favored land of Moab, to the east of the Dead Sea. He took with him his wife Noemi, and his two sons, Chelion and Mahalon. Noemi soon lost her husband; but her sons married women of the country, — Mahalon, Ruth; and Chelion, Orpha. They did not long survive their father, exhausted, it may be, by previous hardship, suffering, and grief at the loss of their home and former affluence.

Thus ten years after she had torn herself away from the lovely hills and once teeming cornfields of Bethlehem, the widowed Noemi found herself alone among the hereditary enemies of her people, left dependent for her daily bread upon the support of her daughters-in-law, widowed and poor like herself. She must have been gifted with rare qualities of heart and mind to have bound these young aliens to her with the strong affection they display in the narrative.

They were quite willing to labor for her, and seem to have had no thought of separating their fortune from hers. But beside the reluctance to depend on them in her old age, and to chain them to her sad fate, there was the irresistible yearning for the land of her birth, the absorbing desire of dying and being buried among kindred. And then, better days had dawned on Israel during her exile, and plenty and peace smiled once more on her loved Bethlehem. So, return she will: old, infirm, friendless, penniless, and alone, she is resolved to face the long, perilous journey.

Not all friendless, however: her daughters will not part from her. Then ensues that touching scene of leave-taking, which, even among exquisite Bible narratives, is unsurpassed in beauty.

"Go ye home to your mothers," — such is the command of her who must have been a true mother to them, — "the Lord deal mercifully with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. May he grant you to find rest in the houses of the husbands which you shall take. And she kissed them."

But they, who had already left the place where they had lived with their husbands, would follow her whithersoever she went. And now they wept, and besought her not to part with them. She plies them with the most persuasive arguments at her command.

"Do not so, my daughters, I beseech you; for I am grieved the more for your distress, and the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.

"And they lifted up their voice, and began to weep again. Orpha kissed her mother-in-law, and returned." Not so Ruth. She "stuck close" to the venerable woman, precisely because

she beheld her touched by "the hand of the Lord," and stripped, like the riven oak-tree, of branches and verdure. "And Noemi said to her, Behold thy kinswoman is returned to her people and to her gods: go thou with her. She answered: Be not against me, to desire that I should leave thee and depart. For whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go, and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. The land that shall receive thee dying, in the same will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so and so to me, and add more also, if aught but death part me and thee."

The most perfect translation can scarcely render the simple and touching beauty of the original. It remains for ever printed on the minds of those that have once read it.

It is one of the mysteries of our nature, that its divine Author can alone understand, how the maiden, tenderly reared, loving and loved by parents, brothers, sisters, and all the dear friends of childhood and youth, can tear herself away from this manifold and mighty love, to follow for life, and to the ends of the earth, a stranger scarcely known before yesterday.

But, in the young woman before us, what is the deep and mysterious love that binds her soul to that of her husband's mother? He is cold in the grave. She is without a roof above her, — a poor, aged waif, borne from her famine-stricken country by the wave of ill-fortune, and stranded, all helpless and forlorn, on this distant shore. Every affection or hope that holds the human heart fast to home and kindred and country should keep Ruth in the land of Moab: in Israel she will be an alien, if not in religion, at least in blood; for irreconcilable enmities and antipathies must ever prevent the race of Moab and Ammon from being looked on with any other feeling than aversion or horror in the land of Israel.

All this Ruth knows, and still she hesitates not. She is by the side of her mother-in-law, her true and only parent henceforth. "So they went together, and came to Bethlehem.

"And, when they were come into the city, the report was quickly spread among all; and the women said, This is that Noemi."

The name means "pleasant;" and the point of their remarks is evident. The exile, now come back, was once known for pleasant smile and pleasant word among them all. She was like a sunbeam in her father's home, among her playmates in girlhood. She was a sunbeam in her husband's home before misfortune came, and he and she, after selling their homestead, went away to Moab. She was a sunbeam, too, in the strangers' land: was it not her bright and pleasant ways that won the great love of Ruth and of Orpha?

And now, instead of the bright and beautiful girl who was the universal favorite, instead of the loved and devoted wife, the proud and still lovely woman, who had departed with husband and sons, to face and overcome a stern necessity, their Noemi comes back aged, feeble, wayworn, and footsore, leaning on the shrinking stranger by her side, with the bloom gone from her cheek, the fire from her eye, the light from her smile, and the sun from her life for ever. There are tears in the words of the women, all her fond companions of old, as they gaze upon the wreck before them, — and "this is that Noemi," once the joy and pride of Bethlehem!

We must leave them to give to the weary travelers the genial and hospitable welcome ever extended by the children of Israel to all their own, and even to strangers, where the traditional wrongs of ages have not chilled the warm currents of nature, and bred reserve or suspicion in place of brotherly affection. The sequel unmistakably informs us, that Noemi had soon to tell the story of her life to willing ears, and that, in the telling, she did not forget the heroic constancy of her adopted daughter, unequaled save by her own heroism under suffering.

They had "returned into Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley-harvest," that is, about Eastertide. The deceased Elimelech had powerful and wealthy kinsmen in the place; among them Booz, who was aged and unmarried. But, though Noemi could claim the rights of kinship from them, her independent spirit did not stoop to that expedient. Besides, Ruth determined that her parent should be a burthen to no one, so long as her own humble but honorable industry could procure a sufficiency for their daily need.

Even at this day, it is no disgrace for the poor to glean after the reapers in every Eastern field; and the humane manners of the country always prevent the latter from gathering up the grain so carefully that no stray ears should be left for the gleaners, who never fail to follow close to the sickles.

"And Ruth the Moabitess said to her mother-in-law, If thou wilt, I will go into the field, and glean the ears of corn that escape the hands of the reapers, wheresoever I shall find grace with a householder that will be favorable to me. And she answered her, Go, my daughter."

The God of the widow and the fatherless directs the steps of the stranger. "It happened" that the owner of the field to which she went was her husband's kinsman, Booz. But she knew it not, and timidly joined the other gleaners. All Bethlehem knew her history, sympathized with her, and admired her, Moabitess though she was. And where nobility of character and unmerited destitution are graced by youth and beauty, all, rich and poor, cease to be hard hearted to their possessor. Thus Ruth shone over the field, shamefaced, and with eyes cast down, and hands trembling at a work she was but little accustomed to.

Booz comes. He, too, is struck by the modest beauty and timidity of the stranger. "Whose maid is this?" is the immediate inquiry. "The Moabitess who came with Noemi," is the answer; "and she hath been in the field from morning till now, and hath not gone home for one moment."

If Ruth's quiet loveliness drew all eyes, and touched all hearts, there is, in the first appearance of Booz upon the scene, the evidence that age in him has only ripened inborn purity and generosity of soul. His first greeting to his workmen is, "The Lord be with you!" and the response is, "The Lord bless thee!" Ay, surely the Lord is there; and his blessing, the chiefest and best, reserved to a whole life of piety and beneficence, is before the eyes of Booz, though he knows it not yet.

He, too, has heard of the return of Noemi, and of the touching attachment of her daughter-in-law. He is now touched, not so much by her youth and grace, as by the great courage that keeps her to her ill-repaid work from early morning, without

stopping for a moment's refection. Alas, poor child! Home she has none; and beneath the roof that shelters her charge and herself, there is not even bread. The scant ears of barley that she has picked up must furnish their only meal for the day.

He is by her side, moved by her loneliness, her poverty, and her perseverance. "Hear me, daughter: do not go to glean in any other field, . . . but keep with my maids [who bind the sheaves] . . . I have charged my young men not to molest thee; and, if thou art thirsty, go to the vessels, and drink of the waters whereof the servants drink." She is overcome, pays him the obeisance due to superior age and station, and expresses her surprise that he should condescend to notice her, a stranger.

"And he answered her, All hath been told me that thou hast done to thy mother-in-law after the death of thy husband; and thou hast left thy parents, and the land wherein thou wast born. . . . The Lord render unto thee for thy work . . . to whom thou art come, and under whose wings thou art fled."

Sweet, sweet, and comforting beyond all conception, are kind words from a great heart to the poor, homeless stranger! Yes: she is under the wings of the God of Israel; and he is preparing her reward.

We may stop a moment to look at the noonday meal of the master and his reapers in the field. Every detail given by the sacred historian thousands of years ago is still true of similar meals at Bethlehem, and all over Palestine, at this day. The corn or barley is parched or roasted over the fire lit in the field, and then swept on to a cloth spread on the ground. The women beat and toss it in the air, until the grain is thoroughly freed from the burned barbs, or husks. The ears are then made into bunches, and placed in heaps with vessels filled with sour wine (called vinegar in the text) and oil: the men and women sit around, dip the ears into this mixture, and make a repast, which custom and hard work cause them to esteem delicious.

"And Booz said to her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. So she sat at the side of the reapers, and she heaped to herself frumenty [parched corn], and ate and was filled, and took the leavings."

Why reproduce the other details of this charming story? Noemi learns from her daughter how this first day has sped with her, and encourages her to return and deserve still more the sympathy of the laborers, and the kindly regard of Booz. Meanwhile, she learns that he is childless and unmarried, with no heir to all his wealth and goodness. She has inquired, too, about the rest of her own and her husband's kinsfolk. Solely bent on the accomplishment of a great duty, both toward the dead and toward the stranger-child who clings to her, she instructs Ruth to solicit the hand of her generous benefactor, who is, at the same time, one of her husband's nearest kinsmen.

The Moabitess, unlearned in the customs of Israel, obeys implicitly, mindful still that she is "under the wings" of the God of Israel. She and Noemi have not overrated the elevation of character so conspicuous in Booz, and that stainless purity of life that no breath has tarnished. To the trembling stranger, who has just opened her womanly heart to him in the full depth of its unsuspecting simplicity, his answer is, —

"Blessed art thou of the Lord, my daughter; and thy latter kindness has surpassed the former: because thou hast not followed young men, either poor or rich. Fear not, therefore, but whatsoever thou shalt say to me, I will do to thee. For all the people that dwell within the gates of my city know that thou art a virtuous woman."

There is another who is nearer akin to Ruth's deceased husband, and who may consider it a privilege to espouse one so gifted as the young Moabitess, even though he should otherwise decline to buy back the inheritance of Mahalon and Elimelech. Booz will lay the proposal before him, then abide the result.

He, meanwhile, shields Ruth from all observation, and provides liberally for her and Noemi's sustenance. A high sense of honor, delicacy, and enlightened piety, marks every act and word of his toward her whom he now hopes to make his wife.

On the morrow, the kinsman is challenged by Booz, before "ten men of the ancients of the city," to redeem the land of Elimelech, and with it take Ruth the Moabitess to wife, "to raise up the name of the [deceased] kinsman in his inheritance."

He refuses. Then Booz said, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's . . . of the hand of Noemi, and have taken to wife Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahalon. . . . Then all the people that were in the gate, and the ancients answered: We are witnesses. The Lord make this woman that cometh into thy house, like Rachel and Lia, who built up the house of Israel; that she may be an example of virtue in Ephrata, and may have a famous name in Bethlehem."

Honored and famous beyond all living women did that lowly and modest bride become; and unspeakable was the blessing bestowed on bridals which the Lord had himself prepared. That branch of a tree deemed accursed in Israel, ingrafted by God's own hand on the trunk of Juda, soon blossomed into Obed and Jesse, and bore David and Mary and Jesus in the fullness of time.

Oh, little do we know when the stranger knocks at the gate of our city for hospitality, rest, and a refuge, that God, and his richest blessing for all time, may be hidden beneath that disguise of poverty and squalor! And how many there are, even in a Christian land, who, by shutting their doors in the face of the poor, and closing heart and hand against their deep distress, are for ever putting away from themselves and their homes the God who taketh as done to himself whatever is done to these, his "little ones"!

When Ruth's babe was brought to Noemi, she "laid it in her bosom, and she carried it, and was a nurse to it. And the women, her neighbors, congratulating with her, and saying, 'There is a son born to Noemi,' called his name Obed [one who serves]."

The old light had come back to Noemi's eyes; and the pleasant smile of former days irradiated her countenance. Perhaps a prophetic light poured on her soul enabled her to read in the future the glories of David and the Messiah; and, as she laid the babe near her heart, she beheld afar the Divine Babe of Bethlehem, Obed's thrice blessed offspring.

X.

The Witch of Endor.

AND Samuel died, and all Israel was gathered together; and they mourned for him, and buried him in his house in Ramatha. And David rose, and went down into the wilderness of Pharan." (1 Kings or Samuel, xxv. i.) About five miles to the north of Jerusalem, perched among crags, like an eagle's nest, was the house of Samuel the Seer; and in it, after a life of ninety-eight years, reposed in the sweet rest of God's ever-faithful servants all that was mortal of Anna's sainted son. For twenty years he had been the sole ruler and oracle of Israel: then Saul was elected king; and, for thirty-eight years more, God preserved the great prophet to be the light and refuge of the nation during the alternations of Saul's fitful piety and frenzied tyranny.

With Samuel departed the last ray of hope from the darkening heart of Saul; and the fortunes of the God-abandoned king waned steadily thenceforward.

Still, to that soul, gifted with such mighty energies for good or evil, for love or hate, the early affection for his benefactor and guide, and all the memories of the prophet's unquenched tenderness, came back with the tidings of his death. Just then, too, Saul had become reconciled with David: the son of Jesse had magnanimously spared his persecutor when an accident placed the royal life in his power; and thus both could meet, together with "all Israel," in Rama, and before the bier of their common friend and the nation's parent.

Never in ancient story were three such grand figures brought together beneath a people's gaze, and in the awful sanctuary of death, as Saul the rejected and doomed, David the chosen and the victorious, and Samuel, lying there in his white priestly robe and prophet's mantle, with the long white beard and hair that razor had never touched, and the angelic features, spiritualized by a century of abstinence and prayer, now surrounded by the halo of a nation's canonization.

The living king was a descendant of Benjamin, and the dead seer a child of Ephraim, — both sprung from Rachel, — while David stood there, the offspring of Ruth the Moabitess, and the founder of Juda's royal line.

Did assembled Israel, as they mourned over him whose like they might never again behold, compare the gigantic and gloomy Saul with the bright, ruddy, youthful frame of the warrior-poet? One is permitted to think so; and that Saul's jealous frenzy blazed up suddenly, as he beheld David kissing the hand that had anointed him king over Israel, and heard the people murmur their sympathy for their proscribed favorite.

Some such incident would account for the sudden introduction of the verse: "And David rose, and went down into the wilderness of Pharan."

The Philistines, and other hereditary foes of God's people, had already profited by the unhappy divisions in the royal family, by Saul's unrelenting and impolitic persecution of his son-in-law, to recover some of their own lost provinces, and to threaten the nation with a renewal of the old-time servitude.

Saul, bent solely on the destruction of David, and fearing no check on his evil passions, now that Samuel was in his grave, allowed the Philistines to ravage his territory with impunity, and employed all his best troops in hunting down the outlawed prince. Once more was the maniac king entirely at the mercy of the fugitive; but old affection, pity, and reverence for the Lord's anointed, withheld the chivalric and God-fearing youth from shedding his enemy's blood.

It was in vain that Saul expressed his remorse, and begged David to forget the past. "I have sinned, return, my son David,

for I will no more do thee harm. . . . Blessed art thou, my son David; and truly doing, thou shalt do, and prevailing, thou shalt prevail." But the king's mood changed as rapidly as the colors of the western clouds at sunset. David had been too long "as the partridge is hunted in the mountains" to put faith in Saul's promises, or to hope to find security within his kingdom. He therefore "arose and went away, both he and the six hundred that were with him, to Achis the son of Maoch, king of Geth," in the land of the Philistines. His presence there, and the exploits that he and his band ceased not to perform, doubtless encouraged Achis not a little to undertake the expedition which proved so disastrous to Israel, and led to the crowning crime of Saul's career.

His jealousy of David's rising fame made him treat as deadly enemies all who favored or sheltered his rival. Thus, when the high priest, Achimelech, gave a refuge for one night to the fugitive prince, the king caused the pontiff, with eighty-five priests and their families, to be ruthlessly slain, and extended the slaughter to the Gabaonites. The same jealousy prompts him to brave the divine wrath, in order to ascertain, without the possibility of a doubt, whether or not his crown should fall on the head of David. This transfer of the royal dignity from his house to that of Jesse had been announced by Samuel: it is from the lips of Samuel dead that the passionate king is resolved to learn the whole truth. The guilty means to which Saul has recourse brings into strong relief another contradiction in his character and conduct. The same ruler who did not hesitate to imbrue his hands in the innocent blood of so many priests and their families, would be suddenly seized with a fanatical zeal for the extirpation of all idolatrous and superstitious practices. He had enacted, at the beginning of his reign, the most rigorous laws against magicians and soothsayers. These enactments were afterward allowed to fall into disuse; but finally, after the massacre of the priests and the Gabaonites, they were revived, and their execution was urged with unrelenting cruelty. This leads us to inquire into the nature of the sin of magic.

Among all the Eastern idolatrous nations, even the most civil-

ized, — indeed, among the Greeks and Romans themselves in their palmiest days, — magic, or divining, was a profession, an art, and a science, deemed as honorable as it was influential and lucrative. We are, within the last quarter of a century, beginning to decipher from among the monumental records of Nineveh and Babylon, the most ancient books of magic on record, scientific treatises drawn up at the very cradle of the race, which will be found to bear a striking resemblance to the known magic formulas in use among our own forefathers of a century or two ago.

The profession embraced colleges or corporations of both sexes, and was taught in special schools in Egypt, Phœnicia, Assyria, and Babylon. It was not confined, as we imagine it, to decrepit or hideous old women. Kings and queens, the noble, the accomplished, the young, the beautiful, and the graceful, deemed it often their very crowning gift to be proficient in the magician's lore. Such were the Circe and Medæa of Grecian story, and such we may conceive the Witch of Endor, to whom we are slowly coming.

No form of superstition ever wielded so powerful a fascination over the souls of men, no matter what their creed, country, or culture, as that of soothsaying or divining. Pagans, Jews, and Christians, we are all alike impelled, by curiosity or self-interest, toward discovering the agencies of the invisible world, toward reading the secret thoughts and aims of those most able to serve or injure us, or toward penetrating the thick veil that covers the near or distant future. Most men, under the pressure of impending calamity or present suffering, would incur fearful sacrifices and risks to foresee their speedy or certain release. To this propensity all idolatrous religions ministered in a thousand illicit ways, while the true religion combated and restrained it by the direst penalties, and the most exalted teachings. The seeking such preternatural knowledge is declared tantamount to idolatry in the divine law, and has ever been held to be such by Hebrew and by Christian; because it is turning one's back on the Creator, the sole source of true light and true good, to seek it at the hands of his enemy, the Devil.

Let us now examine the circumstances under which Saul was induced to violate the most awful prohibitions of the divine law, and to trample under foot his own sanguinary statutes. While David and his six hundred of the bravest in Israel were compelled to seek for an asylum in the land of the Philistines, these wary and warlike foes determined on a united effort to crush or cripple the kingdom of Saul, unhappily divided against itself. They and their allies assembled a mighty force, which they concentrated on the plain of Esdraelon, the great battlefield of Palestine. Saul, leaving a small detachment to watch over David's movements in the south, collected the remaining available troops, and, with his sons, marched at their head to repel the invaders.

"And the Philistines were gathered together, and came and camped in Sunam; and Saul also gathered together all Israel, and came to Gelboe. And Saul saw the army of the Philistines, and was afraid, and his heart was very much dismayed. And he consulted the Lord; and he answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by priests, nor by prophets." Once more two armies face each other on the battlefield where Debbora triumphed of old; but how different is the present conjuncture! All Israel — now a warlike nation, trained to victory during forty years by its own chosen and once invincible king, and led by himself, and a son who unites to his father's skill in war every heroic quality and manly virtue — is there to confront the Philistine. And yet, though backed by such a nation in arms, the veteran warrior-king is "afraid," and "his heart is very much dismayed." There had been a time when the sound of Saul's trumpet was wont to send terror and dismay into the hearts of yonder hostile battalions, — a time when, with a few followers, either he or Jonathan hesitated not to rush upon a host with absolute certainty of victory. God was with Saul then, and Saul's heart was in God's hand.

It is far otherwise now. Saul "consulted the Lord; and he answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by priests, nor by prophets." What is he to do, this self-willed man? The soil of Israel behind him is red with the gore of God's ministers, ruthlessly slain to gratify his unnatural hatred of David, innocent.

The blood of the Gabaonites still cries to Heaven for atonement: Saul will have nothing more to do with Heaven.

On the northern slope of Little Hermon, in the rear of the Philistine host, and directly facing Mount Thabor, still stands the village of Endor (modern Endûr), famed as the spot which witnessed the utter rout of Sisara's and Jabin's forces. The rocky face of the overhanging mountain is honeycombed with caves; and thither, in all likelihood, had fled for concealment the few magicians who had escaped the sword of Saul's officers. Thither, unawed by the sacred memories of the spot, Saul directs his course, to find out one of these very soothsayers.

The prince of God's own chosen people, on the eve of a struggle for national life, comes to crave, from a proscribed woman, this guilty knowledge, and to use the most tremendous forces to obtain it, — necromancy, the evocation of the dead! To compel, in that land and age, the spirits of the dead to appear, or to force evil spirits to assume visibly their forms, human sacrifices were often resorted to; and either the oracle was rendered by the lips of the dead body, or the lying spirit rose from the earth, where the life-blood was still warm. We are not told whether Saul, or his instrument, had recourse to this dread extremity. He would have hesitated at nothing only to know what was to be the issue of the morrow's strife, and what the fate of his own dynasty. "He disguised himself, and put on other clothes; and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night."

They have passed over these historic fields, unmindful of the miracles there performed for Israel; and Thabor's holy shadow is cast almost athwart their path. They have crept up the hillside, like murderers in the night, fearful even of the moon's soft splendors, crowning with beauty and loveliness the lofty summits around the plain; and there they stand in that Devil's temple, the witch's cave.

"And he said to her, Divine to me by thy divining spirit, and bring me up him whom I shall tell thee. And the woman said to him, Behold thou knowest all that Saul hath done, and how he hath rooted out the magicians and soothsayers from the land. Why, then, dost thou lay a snare for my life, to cause

me to be put to death? And Saul swore unto her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no evil happen to thee for this thing."

It is a fearful thing, this profanation of the holy name in such a place, and for such a purpose. And we shudder at hearing this man, once so good and so great, setting at nought that name which had been so often to him a tower of strength, and defying the terrible judgment toward which he was hastening.

"And the woman said to him, Whom shall I bring up to thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel."

The description of the diabolical rite does not sully the inspired page. But let us remember how Samuel is described when he stood by the altar, on the mountain-side, wearing his black mantle, his white Nazarite locks streaming on the wind, his arms lifted on high, and the great heart-cries of his prayer for Saul and Israel ascending to Heaven for hours in presence of the prostrate multitude. Was the once-loved name of Saul the first sound uttered in agonizing tones of love by that holy soul, as it was permitted by the divine justice to answer the unholy call, and to denounce the coming judgment? This would easily explain what follows.

"And, when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice, . . . Why hast thou deceived me? For thou art Saul."

She deems herself lost; but the king re-assures her. "Fear not: what hast thou seen? And the woman said to Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said to her, What form is he of? . . . An old man . . . covered with a mantle." Yes, Saul recognizes the venerable and godlike form. He falls with his face to the ground in presence of the awful apparition, but only to hear the sound of the trumpet of doom in every word.

"And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disturbed my rest? . . . And Saul said, I am in great distress; for the Philistines fight against me, and God is departed from me. . . . Therefore I have called thee, that thou mayst show me what I shall do. And Samuel said, Why askest thou me, seeing the Lord has departed from thee? . . . The Lord will do to thee as he spoke by me; and he will rend thy kingdom out of thy

hand, and give it to thy neighbor David. . . . And the Lord also will deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines; and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me [in death]."

The wretched king, crushed by the weight of the sentence, has fainted away from sheer terror and exhaustion; "for he had eaten no bread all that day." When the necromancer's womanly pity comes to his relief, and restores him to consciousness, the words have ceased, and the godlike apparition has vanished. But the vision will haunt him with its sights and sounds till the eternal night has closed around him.

Contrast this sad wreck of a great man and a glorious king, with the woman whose criminal profession he had himself proscribed, and whose very life was forfeit to the laws of his kingdom and religion. "And the woman came to Saul, for he was very much troubled, and said to him, Behold, thy handmaid hath obeyed thy voice; and I have put my life in my hand. . . . Now . . . hear thou also the voice of thy handmaid, and let me set before thee a morsel of bread, that thou mayst eat, and recover strength, and be able to go on thy journey. But he refused. . . . I will not eat." It is the prostration of despair. The once heroic deliverer of Israel, given over to the fell spirit of revenge, has risked even his soul's salvation only to discover with certainty that David shall inherit his crown, and supersede Jonathan on the throne. When the knowledge thus dearly bought comes upon him, together with that of his near and tragic death, instead of lifting his soul to God, on the very verge of eternity, he consummates his guilt, and adds to the crime of necromancy the last and most injurious offense against the divine goodness, — despair and final impenitence.

Oh, well might the servants who accompanied him on his fatal errand, and even the woman whose impious aid he had invoked to his own destruction, pity the utter and abject helplessness of the fallen monarch, groveling before them in his ruined majesty, like an archangel, on whose forehead the hand of God has just stamped the seal of irremissible condemnation!

So the sorceress, forgetful of her unhallowed power, and mindful only, with a woman's quick sense of commiseration and

helpfulness, of the excess of the sufferer's need, applies herself to mitigate the violence of his mood. "His servants and the woman forced him; and at length, hearkening to their voice, he arose from the ground, and sat upon the bed. Now the woman had a fatted calf in the house; and she made haste and killed it, and, taking meal, kneaded it, and baked some unleavened bread, and set it before Saul and before his servants. And, when they had eaten, they rose up, and walked all that night."

Men and women, no matter what their station, are generally found to be either better or worse than what they profess to be. This is strikingly evidenced in the Israelite king there present, false to his religion and his God, — in the law-giver, compelling that proscribed woman to a most fearful violation of his own law, — as well as in the woman herself, a poor, unenlightened heathen, practicing a science unlawful in Israel, though not unhonored among the surrounding nations, and ready to discharge toward the persecutor of her sect the sweetest and kindliest offices of womanly sympathy and generous hospitality.

And so, descending to the plain, "they walked all that night," the grief-burthened king and his sad followers, till, with the dawn of the fated day, they came within sight of the hills of Gelboe, and the expectant host of Israel.

The Kishon and its affluents, ere the sun went down, were reddened with the best blood of God's people, and bore to the sea, to the anxious Philistine fleets and maritime cities, the tidings of such an overthrow as had never before fallen upon their enemies. "The Philistines fell upon Saul and upon his sons; and they slew Jonathan and Abinadab and Melchisua, the sons of Saul." A host in himself, had he only had God with him, the old hero withstands the onset of his victorious foes. "The whole weight of the battle was turned upon Saul; and the archers overtook him, and he was grievously wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, Draw thy sword and kill me. . . . And his armor-bearer would not . . . . Then Saul took his sword, and fell upon it . . . And on the morrow the Philistines came to strip the slain; and they found Saul and his three sons lying in Mount Gelboe. And they cut off Saul's head,

and stripped him of his armor, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about to publish it in the temples of their idols, and among their people. And they put his armor in the temple of Astaroth; but his body they hung on the wall of Bethsan."

Surely, not without cause did the prophetic soul of Samuel mourn unceasingly over this long-foreseen fate of that Saul whom he had anointed king in the full flower of his glorious manhood, and shown with such pride to assembled Israel, as one who towered head and shoulders above the tallest in the multitude! Well might the seer, as the horrors of that battle-field rose upon his vision, weary the Lord of mercy night and day with the pleadings of his fatherly heart, in favor of the royal castaway and suicide, as well as of the thousands to be involved in this destruction!

But there was another who would have prevented, or promptly repaired, the disasters of that fight, had but one echo of its uproar reached him in Siceleg (Ziklag), in the first flush of his victory over the Amalekites. The terrible truth first flashed upon him on beholding Saul's diadem laid at his feet, stained, perhaps, with the blood of its unhappy wearer. In that noble heart there was room for but one feeling, as the ghastly reality was thrust thus upon him, — overwhelming grief for the heroic dead: for Saul, who had been, in the heyday of his power, a parent and a protector to himself, a shepherd-lad from the hills of Bethlehem; and, above all, for Jonathan, who had been to David, through all his long adversity, the truest of brothers.

Siceleg was at the very southern extremity of Juda, one of the outposts of the Hebrew warriors. Thither David's tribesmen and tribeswomen flocked at the first tidings of the national catastrophe. We can fancy the hero surrounded by the weeping multitude, together with his own household and companions-in-arms, as he pours forth his grief in the following strain, that still moves the reader to tears: —

> "The illustrious of Israel are slain upon thy mountains:
> How are the valiant fallen!
> Tell it not in Geth, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon,
> Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
> Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gelboe, let neither dew nor rain come upon you;
Neither be thy fields of first-fruits.
For there was cast away the shield of the valiant,
The shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

. . . . . .

Saul and Jonathan, lovely and comely in their life,
Even in death they were not divided:
They were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you with scarlet in delights,
Who gave ornaments of gold for your attire.
How are the valiant fallen in battle!
Jonathan slain in the high places!
I grieve for thee, my brother Jonathan;
Exceedingly beautiful and amiable [wert thou] to me,
Above the love of woman.
As the mother loveth her only son,
So did I love thee.
How are the valiant fallen!
And the weapons of war perished!"

When the men of Israel first petitioned Samuel for a king, he heard the divine voice saying to him, "Hearken to the voice of the people; . . . for they have not rejected thee, but me, that I should not reign over them." When Israel, under their new king, were in the intoxication of their first glorious victories over the Ammonites, Samuel took occasion thereof to challenge an examination into his own public conduct, as well as a review of Jehovah's long course of miraculous intervention and fatherly providence toward the nation. Conscience-stricken at the retrospect, "all the people said to Samuel, Pray for thy servants to the Lord thy God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for a king." He was the man of their choice: God's command to anoint him was only consequent upon the prevision, that he would be chosen at the proper time. They tamely submitted to all the atrocities and sacrileges of his long reign; they fought with him against David, sent their sons to hound their liberator from hill to hill, and one hiding-place to another, till he had to take refuge in Moab, among the kinsfolk of his ancestress, Ruth. They rebuked not

Saul when his hands were reeking with the blood of eighty-five priests and their unoffending families, nor when he slaughtered the peaceful and friendly Gabaonites: nay, while banded Israel followed his standard to the plain of Esdraelon, a part of their forces were seeking for David's life.

And so, with Saul they fell, as a people always fall with rulers who are the men of their own choice and whose wickedness they share, either because they approve of it by guilty toleration, or because they copy the vices of the masters they have given themselves.

XI.

Michol and Abigail.

TWO daughters of Saul, prominently connected with David, survived to find an echo in their inmost souls for every line and word in David's dirge, sacred to friendship and patriotism. They might, by recalling to the women of Israel the remembrance of that anointed head deposited in a heathen temple, at the feet of some hideous idol, and of that headless trunk suspended from the walls of Bethsan for carrion crows to tear, aid David in firing the national heart with a desire of revenge, — with that martial ardor and remorseful trust in God, that send armies straight to victory, like a thunderbolt from the Almighty hand.

Merob, Saul's eldest daughter, was first promised in marriage to the young victor of Goliath. But, though this promise was spontaneous on the part of Saul, it was only a means by which his new-born jealousy hoped to secure David's speedy destruction. "And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merob, her will I give thee to wife: only be a valiant man, and fight the battles of the Lord. Now Saul said within himself, Let not my hand be upon him, but let the hands of the Philistines be upon him." God, however, watched over that life so full of mightiest promise; and though David never shrank from danger, even when single-handed against a host, though he returned successful from every trial put upon his valor, the king did not fulfill his pledge.

"And it came to pass, at the time when Merob, the daughter of Saul, should have been given to David, that she was given

to Hadriel the Molathite to wife." So let her pass from our story.

But the younger daughter, Michol (Michal), deserves a larger place here. She was exceedingly beautiful, and, with her elder sister, headed the long train of women who "came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul" when he returned victorious, after the slaying of Goliath and the rout of the Philistines. She was smitten by the modest and manly graces of the beautiful youth, who was the real hero of the pageant. Perhaps it was from this love at first sight that came the rash burden of their song, "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Whether so or not, it proved David's bane and her own, and fired her father's passionate spirit with the fierce and undying jealousy, which, from that hour, darkened his reason, troubled his counsels, and hurried him on from private crimes to political blunders, all culminating at Endor and Gelboe.

Nor are we left much room for surprise at the sudden love which possessed Michol for the extraordinary youth before her, seeing that her brother Jonathan, the brave, the single-hearted, and the constant, was quite carried away by the very first sight of David. A warrior himself, the favorite of the army, and second only to his father in heroic achievements, Jonathan could scarce restrain his generous admiration while David laid at Saul's feet the head and arms of the vanquished Philistine.

That this open affection of Jonathan for David only added fuel to Saul's jealousy, there is every reason to believe. But the declared love of Michol for him afforded her father a second opportunity for seeking the ruin of its object. "And it was told Saul [that Michol loved David], and it pleased him. And Saul said, I will give her to him that she may be a stumbling-block to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be upon him. . . . And Saul thought to deliver David into the hands of the Philistines." He demands that David shall slay, single-handed, a hundred of these enemies, and bring their spoils to Saul. David needed no urging; for he loved the sister of Jonathan, and trusted in God to deliver him from all danger. Thus did he win his bride; and never, since the days of Eve, did maiden

receive at her bridals the treasure of a purer or nobler heart than the peerless David brought her. The sequel will say how she knew ever to keep all her own, this incomparable treasure.

David's fearful feat, and others like it, were a revelation to Saul. He "saw and understood that the Lord was with David. . . . And Saul began to fear David more; and Saul became David's enemy continually."

This jealousy becomes the all-absorbing passion of the wayward king. Every person in his service is solicited to become the assassin of one now bound to him by the closest ties of kindred. Even Jonathan is urged to do away with him. But David is beloved by all, — by Jonathan above all the rest, by Jonathan's gentle mother, Achinoam, and by the young wife.

A crisis suddenly comes in this homicidal mania. Saul resolves to slay David with his own hand. The latter had just returned, victorious once more, from a campaign against the Philistines, having defeated them with great slaughter. It was his delight to charm away the king's evil moods by harp and song; and as he sat before him one day, pouring forth some inspired strain, the tall spear sped like lightning from Saul's hand, but missed its aim. "And David fled, and escaped that night."

But the king has now thrown the mask aside, and will not be balked in his determination. "Saul, therefore, sent his guards to David's house to watch him, that he might be killed in the morning. And when Michol . . . had told him this, . . . she let him down through a window. And he went and fled away and escaped." So was the youthful bride separated from her bridegroom. Many eventful years were to pass before they could meet again, — years that were to mark the downward path of her father, every one of them stained by some awful crime of his, and some public misfortune, and each increasing in tragic gloom, till God's gathering wrath burst like a whirlwind over the field of Esdraelon.

Whether the love of Michol was as deep and abiding as it was sincere in its beginnings, or whether the daughter of Saul inherited qualities that unfitted her for being a suitable life-companion to a soul like David's, it were hard to guess. Certain

it is, that she was now wholly taken up with the anxiety of covering his escape. With a woman's wit and a loving wife's ingenuity, she devises means to occupy the attention of Saul's assassins till David has fled beyond pursuit.

"And Michol took an image [a statue], and laid it on the bed, and put the goat-skin, with the hair at the head of it, and covered it with clothes." To this day, the goats that browse in flocks on the hills surrounding that locality have a reddish coat. This bore a resemblance to the doomed hero's hair. When, after many protestations and entreaties and tears, the king's daughter permitted, in the early morning, the importunate emissaries to violate the privacy of an eastern bed-chamber, they saw the recumbent figure, and the well-known red hair, and could take back to the king the assurance that his son-in-law was safe in the toils, and slumbered still in his wife's chamber.

The excuse given to her father, when the artifice is discovered, must be a falsehood. "And Michol answered Saul, Because he said to me, Let me go, or else I will kill thee." It is the first thing that gives us an insight into Michol's character. A woman of right royal soul would not stoop to a lie at any risk; and a true wife, the wife of such a man as David, would brave a father's resentment by telling him the obvious truth at the peril of her life.

This same fatal lack of truth and depth in her character is further shown by the facility with which she submits to become the wife of Phalti, or Phaltiel, of Gallim. Certes, had she resisted, as the wife of David ought, such a degradation and such a crime during the lifetime of her illustrious husband, some mention would be made of it; for she should have resisted to the death, as became a heroic soldier's true wife. Or had her love been worthy of him, even without her rank and her influence, it would have enabled her to make her way to him over every obstacle. That no effort of the kind is recorded of her is sufficient evidence that no such effort was made; and this gives us a measure of her worth. And oh, the privilege of being associated with David during these trying years, and of ministering, as only a true woman and wife can, to the comfort and consola-

tion of one so harassed and hunted! And the further glory of having her name thus coupled with his, as the angel of his exile, in those sublime songs composed during his wanderings, and sung on every point of the globe, and through all time, by synagogue and by church!

David, however, had not forgotten her, despite her neglect of him. This was David's weakness. When Saul's most powerful adherent, Abner, after Saul's death, enters into a covenant with David to subject all Israel to his rule, he stipulates, as a primary condition, "Thou shalt not see my face before thou bring Michol the daughter of Saul." That her second husband, Phaltiel, "followed her, weeping," a great part of the way, would prove that he loved her dearly, for her beauty at least, if not for her wifely devotion to him. It does not exalt David in our estimation, that he should have been so eager to reclaim her, or to take her into a household where other wives — one of them, at least, far superior to Michol in every womanly virtue — were prepared to dispute her priority of rank, and her influence over the new King.

In her queenly station she is only mentioned once; and the incident throws a flood of light on her career and after-life.

David receives solemn consecration as sovereign of a united people: he has conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusæans, and satisfies the one great yearning of his grateful heart by transferring with extraordinary pomp the ark of the covenant from its resting-place in Gabaa to that part of Jerusalem called, after him, the City of David. The whole nation was present: such a celebration had never been witnessed. It was like the crowning mercy of God over the privileged Hebrew race. In the national pageant all ranks and sexes participated. "David and all Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of wood, on harps and lutes and timbrels and cornets and cymbals." In this grand procession David's household, doubtless, participated. But he did not then dare to place the ark within the precincts of his own dwelling. This second translation occurred a little afterward, and was attended with even more solemnity. The poet-king had applied himself, in the interval, to compose his most beautiful strains; and the nation was fired with its chief's

inspiration. "Seven choirs were with David" on that day, singing alternately or together psalms of triumph and thanksgiving.

"And David danced with all his might before the Lord; and David was girded with a linen ephod." This was a linen garment somewhat in shape like the modern alb, a sort of tunic, reaching to the feet. "And David and all the house of Israel brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord with joyful shouting and with sound of trumpet. And, when the ark of the Lord was come into the city of David, Michol, the daughter of Saul, looking out through a window, saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart." She is shocked at his laying aside his rich armor and royal robes for the light linen ephod of the priests.

We have only to remember the statue, or "teraphim," placed by Michol in David's bed, when she wished to give him time to escape from her father's vengeance: many learned interpreters of Holy Writ conclude, from this fact, that Michol was addicted to secret idolatrous practices, as was then but too frequently the case in Hebrew families. Thus, in that reverence for the God of Israel which was the very core of David's heart, there was no community of feeling between Michol and himself. And he, ever simple in his elevation and ever mindful of his lowly birth, as he played and danced and sang and leaped with joy on that day of his heart's delight, still fancied himself the shepherd-lad of Bethlehem, to whom nothing done for the divine honor, or in the immediate presence of the mercy-seat, could be otherwise than most seemly and decorous and exalting.

But when the ark had been placed in the temporary abode so lovingly prepared for it by the great king, and the profusion of sacrifices and offerings was ended, David "blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. He distributed to all the multitude of Israel, both men and women, to every one, a cake of bread, and a piece of roasted beef, and fine flour fried with oil: and all the people departed, every one to his house."

No wonder that one so whole-souled, so hospitable, so generous toward God and every one of those subject to himself, should have been designated as a man according to God's heart. In all

the fatigue and pomp of that day, he was unmindful only of himself. "And David returned to bless his own house; and Michol, the daughter of Saul, coming out to meet David, said, How glorious was the King of Israel to-day, uncovering before the handmaids of his servants, and was naked as one of the buffoons should be naked."

Here speaks the daughter of Saul, with all her father's passionate and undiscriminating temper, and with the same undutiful disregard of the reverence she owed both to God and her royal husband. The answer is decisive of her fate for ever. "And David said to Michol, Before the Lord, who chose me rather than thy father and than all his house, and commanded me to be ruler over the people of the Lord in Israel, I will both play, and make myself meaner than I have done: and I will be little in my own eyes: and with the handmaids of whom thou speakest, I shall appear more glorious."

No child of Michol gladdened David's household: she did not deserve to be the ancestress of the Messiah.

We may now contemplate a more pleasing picture and a model of female grace and wisdom, by going back a little space in King David's history.

From beside Samuel's bier, he fled with his followers to the southern borders of Juda, and concealed himself on the wooded fastnesses of Carmel, ready either to elude the pursuit of Saul, or to repel the raids of the neighboring Amalekites and Philistines. He and his numerous band subsisted mainly on the enemy, abstaining from every act that could distress their own people. Their first encampment was in the pasture-lands where fed the three thousand sheep and the one thousand goats of a descendant of the great Caleb, on whom the public voice had bestowed the name of Nabal ("fool"). The representative of an illustrious house, he was cursed with the possession of great wealth, unattended by one manly virtue: he was a churl, a sot, and a fool, all the more dangerous and intolerable, that he had at his hand every means of gratifying his brutish propensities, and tyrannizing over all beneath him. But this ignoble wretch had for wife a woman as wise and prudent as she was

beautiful, named Abigail ("the joy of her father"). How she came to be wedded to such a man is easily accounted for in a country where a woman's inclination was but little consulted in matrimonial engagements. Even in our own day and country, we often marvel how maidens who are the joy and light of their parents' household, and the very pearl of their hearts, find themselves all at once cast for life beneath the feet of swine.

Over the numerous flocks of Nabal and his shepherds, David and his companions-in-arms had watched for months, protecting them from every foe, and sacredly abstaining, even in their sorest need, from taking kid or lamb for their own use.

But the shearing-season came, when Nabal's shepherds drove back their flocks to his residence on Carmel, and were entertained by their master at a public banquet, "like the feast of a king." This joyous occasion was chosen by David for appealing to his tribesman's generosity and gratitude. Ten of his followers are sent to Nabal, bearing a courteous message, and a request for whatever succor he may vouchsafe to "his son David." "But Nabal, answering the servants of David, said, Who is David? and what is the son of Isai [Jesse]? Servants are multiplied now-a-days who flee from their masters. Shall I, then, take my bread and my water, and the flesh of my cattle which I have killed for my shearers, and give to men whom I know not whence they are?"

Intemperate men fear nothing when "in their cups;" and, in the intervals between their fits of intoxication, they are irritable, and have but little control of their words. No thought of the consequences of a brutal and gratuitous insult can reach the brain clouded and stupefied by habitual excess.

But the servants of Nabal, who had welcomed with grateful smile and warm words their defenders in the wilderness, are filled with consternation. One of them flies to the good angel of the drunkard's house, Abigail: "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master, and he rejected them. These men were very good to us, and gave us no trouble. . . . They were a wall unto us both by night and day. . . . Wherefore consider, and think what thou hast to do; for evil

is determined against thy husband, and against thy house, and he is a son of Belial, so that no man can speak to him."

There was no time to be lost; for David was already on his way to Nabal's house with four hundred armed men, having sworn not to leave so much as a dog living in that inhospitable abode. "Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two vessels of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of dry figs, and laid them upon asses. And she said to her servants, Go before me: behold, I will follow after you: but she told not her husband Nabal."

He was in the very height of his drunken revel, draining cup after cup to add to his feeling of self-congratulation at having so openly spurned the messengers, and defied the wrath of the son of Jesse. His wise wife has learned by a sad experience that one so besotted is not to be reasoned with.

At the foot of the mountain she meets "David and his men." She alights, advances, and falls at the hero's feet. "Upon me let this iniquity be, my lord: let thy handmaid speak, I beseech thee, in thy ears." How could the most violent resentment resist such an appeal, coming from one equally renowned for the goodness of her heart and the graces of her mind and person? Let us listen to her.

"Let not my lord the king, I pray, regard this naughty man Nabal; for, according to his name, he is a fool, and folly is with him. But I thy handmaid did not see thy servants, my lord, whom thou sentest. Now, therefore, my lord, the Lord liveth, and thy soul liveth, who hath withholden thee from coming to blood, and hath saved thy hand to thee: and now let thy enemies be as Nabal, and all they that seek evil to my lord. Wherefore receive this blessing which thy handmaid hath brought to thee, my lord, and give it to the young men that follow thee."

The remainder of this admirable discourse is like an inspired prophecy of David's future greatness. "The Lord will surely make for my lord a faithful house, because thou, my lord, fightest the battles of the Lord. Let not evil, therefore, be found in thee all the days of thy life." How could David's religious and

noble nature resist such eloquent pleading, coming from the beautiful suppliant before him, and seeming, as it needs must, the warning of God's angel, sent to preserve him from avenging a drunkard's bluster with indiscriminate bloodshed? "And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy speech. And blessed be thou who hast kept me to-day from coming to blood, and revenging me with my own hand."

They feast (we may indulge our fancy in the picture) upon the bounteous fare brought by Abigail, these four hundred men and their leader; while she and her attendants wait on them there beneath the shade of oaks in some secluded dell. It is a sweet scene of rustic repose and hospitality, with its background of border warfare, and suspended violence and bloodshed.

The intrepid woman returns to her mountain-home to find her husband still in his revel. "And Nabal's heart was merry; for he was very drunk; and she told him nothing less or more until morning. But early in the morning, when Nabal had digested his wine, his wife told him these words; and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone." The blusterer of yesterday, when crazed with drink, is but a craven to-day, when the very thought of averted danger is presented to him in his sober mood. He must remedy this sinking of the heart within him by new and more furious libations, day after day, till, on the tenth, apoplexy comes, like the stroke of God's hand, to end a life of debauchery and shame.

We know how David sent to ask the widowed Abigail to become his wife, and share his fortunes. She was one who could appreciate every rich quality in that soul. Thrice happy had David been, ay, and thrice more honored, had he contented him with the treasure of Abigail's love, and been ruled by her wise counsels in his elevation, as he was comforted by her during his remaining years of trial. Then the brightest pages of his life had not been blotted with the murder of Urias, the infamy of Amnon, and the parricidal rebellion of Absalom; nor, worse than all, had he bequeathed to Israel the curse of Solomon's reign, and the pestilence of his corrupt examples to posterity.

XII.

The Queen of Saba.

WHY, throughout all history, do we behold amid the splendors of epochs, transcending all others in wealth, culture, and prosperity, the symptoms of national decadence, as in autumn we see the wasp and the worm attacking the ripest and fairest fruit? It is a question that has often been asked in one form or another, and that has been answered as often, with more or less dissatisfaction to the inquirer.

Were Solomon the wise to return to earth, he might give a pertinent response to the students of our day, who anxiously watch the deepening features of premature decay and corruption where there was such good reason to read the promise of vigorous youth and glorious longevity. It is, however, any thing but certain that either modern peoples, or even the rulers of their choice, would thank Solomon for the lesson, or profit by the recital of his experiences.

One word to account for the disruption of the kingdom that David left so united, so prosperous, so full of healthy life, to his successor, as well as for the epoch of religious degeneracy and apostasy, in which the two bold, bad women who head the next chapter play so prominent a part.

It had been the sole aim of David to secure the superiority of God's people over the surrounding heathen nations, by firmly establishing it on the basis of the double unity of race and religion. God intended the Hebrews to be, until the advent of the Redeemer, a singular people, unlike any other on earth, and

an isolated people, separated from all others by their civil and religious institutions.

In this fundamental, twofold unity the religious element was intended to predominate: the unity of race was but a receptacle for the vital belief in the promises. Hence David's surpassing merit before God was, that, with all his might, he sought to make Jehovah king in Israel, — king in every home and heart, as he was in his own.

This was his wisdom. It penetrated his whole life, and, like a fire from heaven, served to purge away from the pure gold of his nature the stains of his transitory aberrations and follies.

Not so with Solomon. He had only to rule in peace an undivided people, and to consolidate and perfect the work of his heroic parent. He asked for wisdom; but it was the gift of that wisdom whose seat is in the intellect, and leaves the heart barren. He craved that intellectual wisdom which consists in transcendent and varied knowledge of nature and its secrets; political wisdom, that organizes the elements of civil power, develops the internal resources and the external influence of a country, and promotes peace, prosperity, and well-being at home, while securing respect and glory abroad.

Solomon neither asked nor obtained that wisdom of the heart which sets its love, before and above all, on Him who is the end of all things, after whose will all things must be ordered aright in heart and home and state; that deep-seated, living, supernatural piety, which knits the faithful soul to God in weal and woe, that enabled David to bind his people to "the Strength of Israel." We feel that living wisdom of the heart still overflowing in his psalms, more refreshing, life-giving, and perennial than the waters of Siloe in their deep rocky cave.

The very alliances which he formed at the beginning of his reign, with the Egyptian monarch in the south and the Phœnician power in the north, while showing great political sagacity, betrayed inconsistency in his religious faith. He solicited a matrimonial union with the Pharaos in order to bind the court of Egypt to his interests; but this was in formal violation of the Mosaic law. Later, he married a Tyrian princess, and thereby opened a

gate for the admission of Baal and Ashtarte, as he had introduced the gods of the Nile with his Egyptian bride. And both the one and the other union were contracted while Solomon was displaying so magnificent a zeal in building the temple contemplated by his father, and regulating the gorgeous ceremonial of divine worship.

It was also while Solomon's glory was in its unclouded noonday splendor, and before his heart and his kingdom were alike darkened by infidelity and apostasy, that a princess, the ruler of the mighty Joctanite empire of Southern Arabia, resolved to visit Jerusalem. Joctan (or Jectan) was Heber's youngest son; and his descendants could claim kinship with the Hebrews of Palestine. The Phœnician fleets bore, along every shore of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the traders of Palestine, and with them the fame of the kingdom founded by David, and now so wisely governed by David's illustrious son. Doubtless the society of Yemen then was not unlike the society of Central Arabia of to-day, as revealed recently by the traveler Palgrave. Men of every class, of the higher classes particularly, were evermore discussing, with the intellectual vigor characteristic of the race, the great problems of life in their bearing on the present and the future. The atmosphere of the court of Saba was, evidently, not one of enervating voluptuousness or mere barbaric show, but rather a school of discussion, where culture and science were prized above gold or gems, and learned men were honored by the friendship and familiarity of princes.

"And the Queen of Saba [Sebà], having heard of the fame of Solomon in the name of the Lord, came to try him with hard questions. And entering into Jerusalem with a great train, and riches, and camels that carried spices, and an immense quantity of gold and precious stones, she came to King Solomon, and spoke to him all that she had in her heart. And Solomon informed her of all the things she proposed to him: there was not any word the king was ignorant of, and which he could not answer her."

Religious topics were, in all likelihood, the chief subject of inquiry; and the clearing-up of doubts relative to the creed once common to all the descendants of Sem was the matter nearest to the heart of Solomon's royal guest. The recent

completion and dedication of the great temple, the splendid ceremonial introduced by Solomon, the impressive solemnities of the national worship, and the unfeigned piety of the nation, to whose hearts the beautiful sanctuary was now a center of irresistible attraction, — every thing in Jerusalem tended to confirm the truth of such answers as its wise ruler returned to the conscientious queries of his visitor.

The scandals of his after-life had not yet come into such notoriety as to give the lie to his profession of faith, or to neutralize the truth of the solutions given to every theological difficulty. "And when the Queen of Saba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house which he had built, and the meat of his table, and the apartments of his servants, and the order of his ministers and their apparel, and the cup-bearers, and the holocausts which he offered in the house of the Lord, she had no longer any spirit in her. And she said to the king, The report is true which I heard in mine own country concerning thy words and concerning thy wisdom. And I did not believe them that told me, till I came myself, and saw with my own eyes, and found that the half had not been told me. Blessed are thy men, and blessed are thy servants who stand before thee always, and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, whom thou hast pleased, and who hath set thee upon the throne of Israel: because the Lord hath loved Israel for ever, and hath appointed thee king to do judgment and justice."

It were a crime to do the memory of this royal lady the gratuitous wrong to make her the lover of Solomon. Nothing in the sacred page warrants the imputation thus cast upon her by the national vanity of some Jewish writers. She had come to seek religious truth from "the ends of the earth," for her kingdom bordered on the southern sea; and she had been happy enough to obtain it from the lips of a man whom a corrupt heart had not yet made a fool of, and who was then — in the plenitude of his pure fame — the lively image of Christ, the King of peace and truth. These impressions were still further deepened into settled conviction by the spectacle of the public piety daily afforded by the nation. And she returned home to Saba a worshiper of the God

of Sem and Noe. Well had it been if the end of Solomon's reign had been in conformity with such beginnings. Not only all Arabia, but Egypt, and farthest Ethiopia, as well as Palestine and Syria, must have been won by the pacific wisdom of a king and a people whose heart was in God's hand, who made him and his interests supreme, and who, in turn, must have been set by the Lord above all princes and peoples.

But the very courts that he had hoped to bind to his dynasty by illicit matrimonial alliances became afterward the centers in which were formed and fostered the intrigues that proved so baneful to his successors, and so utterly subversive of the political fabric his ungodly prudence had reared. The court of Tyre, even in Solomon's lifetime, obtained, along the northern frontier of his kingdom, a large territory comprising twenty-two cities; and, after his death, the Tyrian princesses Jezabel and Athalia, whose careers form the subject of the following chapter, became the bane of the whole nation.

In Solomon himself, the possession of universal science and of the most refined political skill only begat pride, luxury, licentiousness, and forgetfulness of God, and precipitated its possessor into unbridled lust, into the foulest idolatry, and the enmity of Heaven.

It is undeniable that "Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen, and he had a thousand four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; and he bestowed them in fenced cities and with the king in Jerusalem. And he made silver to be as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones." "Juda and Israel were innumerable, as the sand of the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing." Still, the vast military establishment maintained by this peaceful sovereign, and the labors and services required by him of all the tribes, made his oppressed people complain of his administration as "a grievous yoke." But there was worse than this. While oppressing his own people, and thereby preventing their normal increase, he forgot the generous policy laid down by Moses for incorporating foreigners with the nation, or making them an element of national strength by kindly usage, — an enlightened policy that had also been David's. "Solomon

numbered all the proselytes in the land of Israel . . . and they were found a hundred and fifty-three thousand, and six hundred. And he set seventy thousand of them to carry burthens on their shoulders, and eighty thousand to hew stones in the mountains, and three thousand and six hundred to be overseers."

We have here Egypt in Israel, — Egyptian oppression in the intolerable service exacted of the people. So would not David have ground his subjects, or the "strangers in the land," even to build up God's house. And we can not forget the frightful social cancer of polygamy fastened by Solomon on the vitals of the nation, and becoming in his palace, and through his example, a plague-spot so fearful, that the mind recoils with horror from the thought of it; and with that abomination, the worst abomination of all, the idols of his heathen wives enthroned in Jerusalem, with their priests and priestesses and all the solemn ceremonials of their worship, insulting the true God beneath the very shadow of the great temple, and within a stone's-throw of the ark of the covenant! Better that the temple never had been reared; far better had it fared with Israel, if they still dwelt in tents amid the barren wastes of Arabia Petræa. Poverty, toil, hardship, adversity, warfare, are the nurses of true men, and the builders of a nation, as the breeze and the storm are of the mountain-oak; but luxury and lust, and forgetfulness of God, are the bane alike of individual manhood and of national life.

In Solomon's subsequent career, and in its lamentable consequences, we have the *corruptio optimi pessima*, — the archangel's nature changed into the fiend's. Even while the gorgeous pageant of the Queen of Saba's departing train astonished Jerusalem, she might have heard, among the crowds that lined her passage, ominous murmurs of discontent, both at Solomon's oppressive extravagance and the increase of the female portion of his household. Had his royal visitor been a mere worldly politician, gifted with the political sagacity that can read the signs of the times, she might have discerned and deciphered "the handwriting on the wall," both of Solomon's palace and Solomon's temple. But none, and no one less than he whom it most concerned, had yet noticed the prophetic characters.

XIII.

Jezabel and Athalia.

ROBOAM, Solomon's son by a heathen Ammonite princess, had been brought up amid the fabulous luxury and servility of his father's court, and inherited the general popular discontent bred by oppressive taxation and the deep-seated jealousies and enmities consequent on the downfall of the house of Saul, without inheriting any portion of Solomon's wisdom. When he went to Sichem, soon after his accession, the assembled people besought him to lighten the taxes. "Do thou take off a little of the grievous service of thy father, . . . and we will serve thee." His father's old counselors advised him to grant what they demanded. But he "consulted with the young men that had been brought up with him, and stood before him. . . . And he spoke to them [the people] according to the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy; but I will add to your yoke: my father beat you with whips; but I will beat you with scorpions."

The son's folly persisted in grinding the people, and in imitating his father in other evil ways, unmindful of every warning voice. The tribe of Ephraim, accustomed to the leadership in Israel from Josue to Samuel, had accepted with an ill grace a Benjamite king from her great prophet-judge, but had shown unmistakable signs of discontent when the scepter passed from Saul to the tribe of Juda, in the hands of David. This jealous discontent grew, during the latter part of Solomon's reign, with the ever-increasing burthen of taxation.

Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, who had been chosen by Solomon to superintend the taxes and services in labor exacted of his fellow-tribesmen, must have clearly discerned this dangerous disaffection. The Ephraimites were proud of his talents, encouraged his ambition, and countenanced his having a train of three hundred chariots and horses. It was only then that Solomon suspected him of aiming at royal state, and forced him to fly to the court of Egypt, but not before the prophet Ahias (Ahijah) had declared to the Ephraimite that God destined him to reign over ten of the twelve tribes. Shishak gave him his sister-in-law in marriage; and, with her and an infant son, he hastened to return home after the death of Solomon.

When this child sickened and died, as is touchingly related in 3 (1) Kings xiv., "all Israel" mourned for him, as if he were heir to the throne. This incident, among many others, should have warned Roboam of the position the Ephraimite held in the people's sympathies, if any sign of coming revolution could be read by one stricken with judicial blindness.

When Roboam brutally rejected the national demand of redress, his rival, Jeroboam, was already the leader of the northern tribes, and became forthwith their chosen king. The single tribe of Juda at first remained faithful to the house of David; the tribe of Benjamin soon afterward cast its lot with Juda; and the Levites, who remained neutral in this lamentable quarrel, migrated from the schismatic kingdom, and took up their abode in the kingdom of Juda. Thus the despotic disposition of Solomon's son, fostered amid vice and voluptuousness, consummated a division, prepared by universal discontent and miserable tribal rivalries.

Jeroboam, the better to make one, both in religion and in politics, the new kingdom he had formed out of the ten northern tribes, had introduced the worship of the Egyptian calf-god Mnevis, setting up a golden image of him in the sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel, with the inscription, "Behold thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Thither the Hebrews of the northern kingdom, now called the Kingdom of Israel, resorted for worship on the annual feasts, instead of going down to Jerusalem. And this change was accepted by the many.

Half a century after this deplorable revolution, Amri (Omri) was King of Israel, and displayed the same determined and unscrupulous spirit as Jeroboam. The sole aim of his policy was to strengthen his position by establishing a firm friendship with the Syrian and Phœnician kings. To him religion was only an instrument of state policy; and he was ever ready to adopt that which he deemed most serviceable to his purpose.

He married his son Achab to a Phœnician princess, Jezabel, the daughter of Ethbaal, King of Tyre and Sidon, and high priest of Ashtarte or Ashtoreth. All the fires that ever burned in the fierce blood of the Phœnicians seemed concentrated in that woman's bosom, hating the Hebrew race with an intensity that her marriage with a weak, vacillating, and unprincipled husband, did in no wise diminish; and the God and religion of Israel with a passion that stopped at nothing, and could be satiated by nothing, short of the abolition of the true faith. The readers of these pages can judge somewhat of the masculine qualities of the women of her line, when they recall the fact that Dido or Elisa, the foundress of Carthage, was a near relative, and almost a contemporary, of Jezabel's.

The baneful career of this licentious woman demonstrates the absolute wisdom of the divine law forbidding the Hebrews to take wives from the idolatrous nations round about. Religion in a woman's heart becomes an absorbing passion. She will employ all her powers of persuasion, all her characteristic perseverance, and all the means at her disposal, to make the cause of her gods prevail within the entire sphere of her influence, whether household or kingdom.

Achab, without either religious conviction or strength of character, was a mere plaything in the hands of a woman as determined as Jezabel. Hence, immediately after his marriage, "he went to serve Baal, and adored him. And he set up an altar for Baal, the temple of Baal which he had built in Samaria. And he planted a grove [for the rites of Ashtarte]; and Achab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, than all the kings of Israel that were before him." The worship of the Sidonian Ashtarte had been first authorized in Israel by Solomon. The

building of this temple, and the planting of the grove, by Achab, probably occurred before his accession to the throne. After that event, the abominable worship of the Phœnician deities formed such a magnificent establishment in the capital, that "four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and four hundred prophets of the grove" (or Ashtarte), ate at Jezabel's table. There were almost as many at Jezrahel in after-years.

What is to become of the faith of Abraham and Miriam and Debbora during the reign of this young, beautiful, and all-powerful woman, with the greater part of a century to carry out her plans, and three kings of Israel, her husband and two sons, and two kings of Juda, her son-in-law, and grandson, as her zealous tools? Sensual and enervating pleasures are ever the means employed by those who want to corrupt the faith and the morals of a nation; and from Achab's court at Samaria, with the fascinations of the temple and the grove, and the blandishments and bribes that a young and unscrupulous queen could wield to good purpose, corruption and idolatry spread from above, downward and around, ever deeper and wider, from the ruling classes to every hamlet and hovel in the land.

But amid the gloom and despair that settled on those who remained faithful to the old belief and worship, suddenly stands forth to confront that queen, and to drive back the advancing tide of immorality and idolatry, the sublime figure of a Nazarite, — Elias the Thesbite. A countryman of Jephte, but one whose only arms were prayer and abstinence, clad in his long sheepskin mantle, tied round his loins by a girdle of camel's hair, with his Nazarite locks hanging down below his shoulders, Elias has come at God's bidding, with the swift and invisible advance of an angel, to Samaria. He appears, unheralded and unexpected, in the midst of the gay and splendid court, before the astonished eyes of Achab and his queen, and their circle of priests and damsels. And he "said to Achab, As the Lord liveth, the God of Israel, in whose sight I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to the words of my mouth." He is gone, before the stupor caused by his apparition, and the terrible import of his prophecy, have allowed any attempt toward detaining him.

But Jezabel soon recovers from the stunning effect of his message. She is well acquainted with the schools established by Samuel, and maintained ever since for the culture of sacred science, and the arts connected with the splendor of public worship, — "the schools of the prophets:" she also knows the salutary influence exercised over the popular mind and morals by the institution of the Nazarites; and she resolves forthwith to exterminate them. The work was done with the thoroughness characteristic of her every measure of persecution. Only a hundred out of many thousands of these devoted men were saved, and concealed in caves by Abdias, the governor of the royal household, who fed them there "with bread and water," till the heat of the pursuit was over. But Elias was sought for in vain throughout the length and breadth of Palestine, and in the surrounding kingdoms, the rulers of which had to affirm on oath that the prophet was not hidden within their realms.

During three years and six months God protected Elias miraculously in various retreats. But the drought came, and continued the while; and a fearful famine reigned throughout the guilty land. When the distress was at its height, Elias once more comes forth boldly to do battle in his own way with Achab and Jezabel, and Baal and Ashtarte. It is a passage of sacred history familiar to every Sunday-school child, that memorable sacrifice on Mount Carmel, where all Israel, king and court, with the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, and the four hundred priests of Ashtarte, surrounded the altars of their impure gods; while the great Thesbite on the other side stood near the scattered stones of an altar once sacred to Jehovah, and, with his single servant, set about collecting the fragments, and building up the altar of his God. What conflicting emotions must have filled the breasts of the vast multitude of beholders! Few indeed were those who dared to profess openly their belief in the God of Israel. The majority of the Israelites present had been brought up in unbelief, or had been led by fear or interest to feign it; and none among these crowds were more bitterly opposed to the prophet, or more desirous that he should be confounded on that day. But around the prophets of Baal and Ashtarte, what a magnificent

pageant attracted the eye, and excited the admiration, of the spectator! Eight hundred and fifty ministers of the foul Phœnician and Syrian deities, attired in the gorgeous vestments of their office, with numberless inferior assistants, musicians, and devotees, contemplated with mingled derision and hatred the patient labors of the insignificant Thesbite and his servant, while the king and his courtly throng of nobles and warriors watched the proceedings with an apprehension founded on their knowledge of the mysterious powers of Elias.

From early morn till noon, the brilliant crowd of priests called on their gods to send down fire from heaven on their holocaust. They sang, they danced, they leaped, they shrieked their invocations, and cut themselves with knives and lancets, to propitiate their demon deities. But all in vain.

And then the recreant Israelites are challenged to draw near the man of God. On the altar built up anew, the victim is laid, and the attentive multitude hears the prayer, "O Lord, God of Abraham and Isaac and Israel, show this day that thou art the God of Israel, and I thy servant. . . . Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may learn that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart again."

The fire descends; the people confess that Jehovah is God; and the eight hundred and fifty prophets are seized by the multitude, and dragged down to the Kishon, whose waters bear their corpses to the Phœnician shore.

It is now a life-struggle between Elias and Jezabel. She was at this time in Jezrahel, at the western extremity of the Gelboe ridge. On the hill-top she had built herself a fortified palace, a temple to Baal, and planted a grove to Ashtarte; and around these a beautiful city had sprung up, as Versailles arose round the palace of the Fourteenth Louis.

Thither Achab had sped in all haste after the issue of this solemn contest, pursued by the rain-storm, which, at Elias' prayer, had burst from the skies; and thither, borne swifter on foot than the king in his chariot, Elias hastens to confront the terrible queen, his hands still reeking with the blood of her priests.

"And Achab told Jezabel all that Elias had done, and how he

had slain all the prophets with the sword. And Jezabel sent a messenger to Elias, saying, Such and such things may the gods do to me, and add still more, if, by this hour to-morrow, I make not thy life as the life of one of them."

This paints the woman. Elias knew her well; nor did he wait to brave her revenge.

Her influence thenceforward may be traced in the system of terrorism established in the kingdom, and the abject submission with which every act of the government was accepted; for she was the government. One single fact will prove this, and show, as well, in its full light, her grasping and sanguinary disposition.

We have seen that she had created for herself a magnificent establishment at Jezrahel, or Jezreel ("God's sowing"), so called from the lovely and fertile country in the midst of which it is situated. From the lofty tower of her palace, this ambitious and masculine princess commanded a view of the valleys that stretched away eastward to the Jordan, and the Mountains of Galaad beyond; and westward the eye embraced the wide plain that ended at the foot of Mount Carmel and the sea. Even for strategic purposes, the choice of the position for a semi-official residence was most admirable. On this hill-top a city sprang up; and Jezabel spared no means to make of the abode a paradise for her courtiers, for the ministers of Baal and Ashtarte, and for all who did her unquestioning service. Eastward of the city lay a tract of land, cultivated chiefly as a vineyard, and belonging to Naboth, the descendant of one of the early proprietors, odious, on that account, to Jezabel, and perhaps still more odious for his attachment to Jehovah. He is therefore bidden to come to the king in Samaria.

"And Achab spoke to Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may make me a garden of herbs, because it is nigh and joining to my house, and I will give thee for it a better vineyard; or, if thou think it more convenient for thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. Naboth answered him, The Lord be merciful to me, and not let me give thee the inheritance of my fathers."

It is the answer of a true-hearted man, to whom the homestead transmitted to him by his ancestors is dearer than any other spot on earth, and the sacred memories of which no treasure can purchase. Besides, other homesteads, adjoining Naboth's, had been bought or usurped to make way for the Temple of Baal and the Grove of Ashtarte; and Naboth may have been one not willing to desecrate the home of his fathers by giving it up to a like purpose.

The king returns to his palace "angry and fretting .... And, casting himself upon his bed, he turned away his face to the wall, and would eat no bread."

Such is the pusillanimous tyrant to whom Jezabel is wedded. But now attend to her. She learns the cause of his dejection; and we can almost fancy we see the contempt that curls her proud lip as she exclaims, "Thou art of great authority indeed, and governest well the kingdom of Israel! Arise, and eat bread, and be of good cheer: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezrahelite. So she wrote letters in Achab's name, and sealed them with his ring, and sent them to the ancients and the chief men that were in his [Naboth's] city. .... And this was the tenor of the letters: Proclaim a fast, and make Naboth sit among the chief of the people; and suborn two men, sons of Belial, against him, and let them bear false witness that he hath blasphemed God and the king; and then carry him out and stone him."

The bold, bad woman takes no roundabout way to her end. She knows the pliant material of which her nobles are made, and that "sons of the devil," ready to swear away the honor and life of the innocent, are everywhere at her beck. The iniquity is consummated without a moment's faltering or delay. Lest Naboth should leave heirs to denounce the murderers, and contest even with royalty the unjust possession of their patrimony, that same night Naboth and his children are stoned to death together.

"Arise," — such is the triumphant bidding of the murderess, — "and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth; ... for Naboth is ... dead."

The ground is still reeking with the blood of this father and

his unoffending children, when Achab sets out from Samaria to take possession of their homestead; but then, at the gate of the city, God's justice stands before him in the person of Elias.

"And Achab said to Elias, Hast thou found me thy enemy? He said, I have found thee, because thou art sold to do evil in the sight of the Lord." There is no pause in the awful utterance. Elias addresses him in the words of the divine judgment, "Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and I will cut down thy posterity. . . . In this place, wherein the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, they shall lick thy blood also. . . . The dogs shall eat Jezabel in the field of Jezrahel." Jehu, who was doomed to execute this double sentence, was there in attendance on his master, Achab. For a moment, the awful messenger stood erect before the trembling and guilty king; and he was gone the next. "And, when Achab had heard these words, he rent his garments, and put haircloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and slept in sackcloth, and walked with his head cast down."

The doom pronounced by Elias was so far changed, in consideration of his remorse, that Achab's children were not cut off in his lifetime. But the dogs of Samaria licked up his blood from his chariot when he was brought back mortally wounded from battle; and the more literal part of this doom was fulfilled afterward in his son Joram.

Jezabel survived her husband fourteen years. Her eldest son, Ochozias (Ahaziah), reigned only two; walked in his father's footsteps; showed himself a true son of his mother; was a faithful worshiper of her gods, and tolerated, if he did not abet, the immoralities and sorceries of which Jehu afterward accused her. That she watched unweariedly over him in death, as in life, can be surmised from his sending to consult Beelzebub at Accaron, when fatally injured by a fall.

The messengers had not sped far on their road, when Elias stood before them in the well-known garb. "Is there not a God in Israel, that ye go to consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron? Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, From the bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down. . . . And Elias went away."

But the king, informed of this, sent, in succession, two companies of fifty men to command and compel the presence of Elias. They are consumed by fire from heaven. A third company is sent to entreat him humbly; and he yields, presents himself to the dying prince, as well, most likely, as his detestable mother, and reiterates, with unchanging sternness, "Thou shalt surely die."

Jezabel loved not any the more, for this, the fearless prophet, the bane of her house and her life.

She lived on, as she had ever lived, the open profligate, and the apostle of Baal. During the twelve years that Joram sat on the throne of Samaria after his brother's death, she was supreme in the land. Age had not quenched her passions; and the doom partially fulfilled in Achab and Ochozias could not shake her intrepid spirit.

It came for her at length. Joram, sorely wounded in battle, had sought his mother's delicious retreat in Jezrahel, and the hopeful succor of her magic arts. Thither, too, came Ochozias, King of Juda, Jezabel's grandson. Jehu, Achab's former attendant, was now captain of Joram's army, with his headquarters across the Jordan, at Ramoth-Galaad. Eliseus, the disciple and successor of Elias in the prophetic office, sent one of his attendants to the general to anoint him in secret, as Saul and David had been anointed before him; and the messenger delivered this charge to the new king: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over Israel, the people of the Lord. Thou shalt cut off the house of Achab thy master, and I will revenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord at the hand of Jezabel. . . . And the dogs shall eat Jezabel in the field of Jezrahel, and there shall be no one to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled."

The message is delivered into no unwilling ears. His brother officers espouse his cause. Orders are given that no man leave the camp and city, lest the tidings of his approach should be borne to Jezabel; and he sets out with a select body of men.

"The watchman, therefore, that stood upon the tower of

Jezrahel, saw the troop of Jehu coming, and said, I see a troop. . . . So there went one in a chariot to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, Are all things peaceable? And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? Pass, and follow me." A second messenger receives the same answer; and finally Joram and Ochozias, "each in his chariot, went out to meet Jehu, and met him in the field of Naboth the Jezrahelite."

Joram falls there while fleeing like a coward, "shot between the shoulders; and the arrow went out through his heart. . . . And Jehu said to Badacer his captain, Take him, and cast him into the field of Naboth the Jezrahelite." Ochozias, in his turn, is overtaken, and meets with a like fate. But where is Jezabel, the chief culprit?

From her watch-tower on the brow of the hill, she has beheld the tragedy enacted beneath her on the plain, and feels that the hour predicted by the Thesbite is upon her, big with all the vengeance due to a long life of impiety, oppression, and blood. Not even with her awful fate staring her full in the face, does her indomitable pride and queenly spirit forsake her. She will neither flee nor hide, but meet death in regal attire. "Jezabel, hearing of his [Jehu's] coming in, painted her face with stibic stone [antimony], and adorned her head, and looked out of a window. . . . And Jehu lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is this? And two or three eunuchs bowed down to him. And he said to them, Throw her down headlong. And they threw her down; and the wall was sprinkled with her blood."

The victor stops not one moment to consider this royal wreck: the train of chariots and horsemen pass onwards over it. It was only when the possession of the city was secured, and Jehu was seated at table, that he bethought him "to see after that cursed woman, and bury her, because she is a king's daughter. And, when they went to bury her, they found nothing but the skull, and the feet, and the extremities of her hands. And, coming back, they told him. And Jehu said, It is the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant, Elias the Thesbite."

Ah! one would think that a man who had thus beheld the terrific realities of God's judgment, and been himself the agent

in this just retribution, would so fear the Lord of Might as never to be untrue to him. "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all his heart."

2. Sixty years elapsed from the division of Roboam's kingdom to the accession of the good King Josaphat (Jehoshaphat) to the throne of Juda. Jeroboam was allowed to reign twenty-two years, dying, as he had lived, the enemy of Jehovah. His dynasty ended with his son Nadab, who was slain, in the second year of his reign, by one of his own officers. This usurper's son met with a like fate at the hands of Zimri (Zamri), who, in his turn, perished in the flames of his palace, while besieged by Omri, Achab's father. Under Roboam and his immediate successor, Abias (Abijah), idolatry was encouraged by the royal examples, as well as by statutes of toleration. In the kingdom of Juda, Asa and Josaphat, the latter especially, labored to restore the national religion to its former splendor and supremacy, while promoting the temporal welfare of their subjects. But, during Asa's long reign of forty-one years, no motive could induce him to contract either friendship or alliance with the idolatrous kings of Israel. Fortunate had it been for Josaphat his son, and still more so for his people, had he pursued in this his father's upright policy. On the contrary, the courts of Jerusalem and Samaria, so opposed in religious spirit and political interests, were drawn together by familiar intercourse; and the friendship was soon cemented by matrimonial alliances. The princes born in both families received the same names, — a fact occasioning no little confusion to students of Jewish history, — and Josaphat consented to have his son and heir Joram (Jehoram) wed Athalia, daughter of Achab and Jezabel. Joram, during the last years of his father's reign, had a principal part in the government; and one may thence deduce the influence that Athalia began to exercise over the affairs of the kingdom. Her mother's uncompromising idolatry led in Samaria, and throughout the whole of the northern kingdom, to the setting-aside the mongrel Egyptian worship introduced by Jeroboam, and the establishment of the Phœnician deities with their priesthood and ritual. It became the aim of Athalia, from her wedding-day, to effect a like sweeping revolu-

tion in the worship of the kingdom of Juda; and in this she completely succeeded. Joram, her husband, became, under her inspiration, a zealous apostle of Baal, and died dishonored and unmourned, his body being cast out from the sepulchers of his fathers. But let us take up the thread of our narrative where we left it, at the death of Jezabel.

"And Athalia, the mother of Ochozias, seeing that her son was dead, arose, and slew all the royal seed. But Josaba [or Josabeth], . . . sister of Ochozias, took Joas, the son of Ochozias, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, out of the bed-chamber with his nurse, and hid him from the face of Athalia."

The tigress will defend her whelps at the risk of her life; but here is Jezabel's daughter pitilessly slaughtering all her own descendants. This horrifies us even in Achab's evil brood. But let us consider the provocation.

While the dogs were yet wrangling over the bones of Jezabel, beneath the walls of her fairy palace, Jehu had issued orders for the extermination of every one of the seventy sons of Achab still living in the kingdom. Their tutors and guardians, as well as the governors of the cities in which they dwelt, were forced to be their executioners, and bring forthwith their heads to Jezrahel. When the new king rode out of the city, he found these sad trophies placed in two heaps at the city gate. But, ere he left it, "Jehu slew . . . all [Achab's] chief men, and his friends, and his priests, till there were no remains left of him."

The royal family of Juda, through the marriage of Athalia with Joram, son of Josaphat, had identified itself with that of Israel. They, too, became the object of Jehu's sanguinary pursuit. As he and his followers rode toward Samaria, forty-two princes of the house of Juda, "brethren of Ochozias," met him at Beth-Eked ("the shearing-house"), and were there slaughtered, and cast into an adjoining well. In Samaria itself, Jehu, by simulating zeal for the worship of Baal, convened all the ministers and worshipers of the god, from far and near, to a solemn sacrifice in his honor, to be offered up in Jezabel's great temple. "There was not one left that did not come."

When the edifice was thus filled, and hymn and dance were proceeding amid the clouds of incense, a chosen band of Jehu's soldiers set upon the unarmed crowd, and cut down, to the last man, woman, and child, every worshiper there.

It was this total annihilation of the work and family of Achab and Jezabel, that filled their daughter with a murderous frenzy, and made her kill every one of her son's children; so that, after her, the line of David, like that of Achab, should be blotted out for ever. But she had long before given a taste of her sanguinary temper. No sooner had her husband Joram been acknowledged as sole king of Juda than (by Athalia's advice, it is thought) he massacred every one of his brothers. Thenceforward Athalia, Baal, and Ashtarte ruled in Jerusalem.

One is relieved, as from the weight of a hideous nightmare, after being forced to look upon fiendish men and women, and scenes of appalling carnage, to find the stately form and beautiful character of Josabeth, a noble scion of David, and the only princess of her line ever wedded to a high priest. She was the daughter of Joram, but not by Athalia, and was the wife of the high priest Joiada. When she heard of the massacre of her brother's children, and while the men of Juda, indifferent to the preservation of these sole remnants of David's dynasty, kept aloof, and dared not brave the bloody dagger of a woman, another woman rushed into the chamber of death, reckless of every peril, and sought out among the corpses of her kinsfolk the babe infolded in its nurse's arms, and bore them both swiftly and safely to the secrecy of God's house.

She was, doubtless, well acquainted with the deep subterranean passages connecting the palace with the holy place; and through one of them she may have borne her precious charge.

"And he was with her six years, hid in the house of the Lord. And Athalia reigned over the land." In her lived and ruled all her mother Jezabel.

When one reflects that it was the holy King Josaphat, — a man enlightened, zealous for the divine honor, for the religious unity, the intellectual and moral education of his people, and all that could conduce to their temporal prosperity, — who did not

hesitate to contract an alliance with the house of Achab, and sanctioned or tolerated the marriage of his son and heir with the daughter of Jezabel, her mother's peer in intellect, ability, and wickedness, — one is struck dumb with amazement. The law forbidding such marriages was fundamental in the theocratic economy of the Hebrew nation. Its violation inevitably entailed the most disastrous consequences; yet none of the heavy judgments that fell on the transgressors seem to have served as a warning to the best kings.

Nevertheless God kept the lesson before the eyes of the nation, by chastisements increasing in severity with each successive generation. And here is a woman, the savage daughter of a savage mother, who has her heel on the neck of the same people, that, under David, balanced the power of Egypt and Assyria.

For six long years, this woman, without any title to the scepter of Juda, held it with a hand so firm, that it required a miracle of audacity in Josabeth and her husband to wrest it from her, and bring her to condign punishment. At the end of the sixth year, the garrison of Jerusalem were made acquainted by the high priest with the existence of the royal child, and sworn, within the precincts of the temple, to support his right to the throne. Dividing their forces on the day appointed for the revolution, one-third stood on guard at Athalia's palace: the remaining two-thirds, with the armed priests and Levites, lined the approaches to the temple and its courts. The king was anointed, crowned, and proclaimed, with sound of trumpet, amid the acclamations of the soldiers; and Athalia, roused by the shouting, and the rush of the people toward the holy place, hurried thither incautiously, and without escort.

"She saw the king standing upon a tribunal, as the manner was, and the singers and the trumpets near him, and all the people of the land rejoicing, . . . and she rent her garments, and cried, 'A conspiracy, a conspiracy!' But Joiada commanded the centurions, . . . Have her forth without the precinct of the temple. . . . And they laid hands on her, and thrust her out by the way by which horses go in, by the palace; and she was slain there. . . . And all the people of the land went into the Temple

of Baal, and broke down his altars; and his images they broke in pieces thoroughly. They slew, also, Mathan, the priest of Baal, before the altar."

But the evil blood of Jezabel and Athalia had so poisoned every germ implanted and nurtured in the heart of this child-king, that in after-years, "between the temple and the altar," in the sanctuary where he was reared, he caused to be stoned to death the high priest Zacharias, Josabeth's own son, because the holy man reproved him for reviving the worship of Baal and Ashtarte. Thus was this heroic princess the mother of a martyr who was canonized by the lips of our Lord himself (Matt. xxiii. 35).

But woe to the people who tolerate such martyrdoms!

XIV.

The Widow of Sarephta.

WE must not part with the sublime personality of Elias with the impression that his mission consisted exclusively in wielding the lightning of Jehovah against idolatrous priests, apostate rulers, or women like Jezabel, to whom nothing was sacred. The hand that so often launched the thunderbolt at the heads of the highest and mightiest could also bind up the wounds of the poor with the gentle tenderness of a mother; and the soul that could pronounce with unflinching sternness the most awful judgments on prevaricating princes and peoples was brimful of the softest pity for every form of suffering.

During the first stage of the long drought which Elias had foretold in punishment of Achab's and Jezabel's wickedness, and while their satellites searched every nook and corner of Palestine for the delinquent prophet, he lay concealed in the deep hollow of a torrent-bed near the Jordan, miraculously fed by a raven, and drinking of the waters of the brook. But this soon ran dry; and, the pursuit of his enemies becoming more eager, he was bidden by God to take refuge in the house of a poor widow of Sarephta.

Halfway between Sidon and Tyre, on the road which ran along the shore uniting the two beautiful Phœnician cities, lay Sarephta, its feet washed by the waves of the Mediterranean, and its streets and suburbs creeping up the acclivity behind. As its name, *Tsarafa*, "smelting-house," indicates, the city derived its importance from its works in iron and the precious metals, —

an industry inherited by its Syrian neighbor, Damascus, after the downfall of the Phœnician power on that coast. In the reign of Achab, these much-valued products of Sarephta, together with Phœnician earthenwares, were carried to every civilized country in the vessels that lay along its wharves.

It was thus in the very heart of Jezabel's native land, and within sight of her father's capital, that the prophet hastened, by stealthy marches, to find a temporary asylum and sustenance.

The house to which he came was among the poorest of the poor. It was that of a widow with an only son, both reduced by the prevalent drought and famine to the utmost extremity.

"He arose, and went to Sarephta. And, when he was come to the gate of the city, he saw the widow-woman gathering sticks; and he called her, and said to her, Give me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." She evidently recognized in the man before her, with his shaggy cloak, his floating locks, and ascetic mien, a Nazarite, or a prophet of Israel. He comes to her spent with long travel, thirst, and hunger; and she eagerly hastens to relieve his most pressing need.

"And, when she was going to fetch it [the water], he called after her, saying, Bring me, also, I beseech thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand." It is even so: those whom God clothes with the awful power of working the most stupendous miracles are themselves often reduced to the greatest distress. They do not think of using their power to relieve their own personal wants. Even Christ, who multiplied the loaves to feed the thousands who had come to be taught in the wilderness, would have his apostles, in their extreme hunger, satisfied with plucking and eating a few ripe ears of corn from the roadside.

"And she answered, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have no bread, but only a handful of meal in a pot, and a little oil in a cruse: behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

It is a sad but eloquent tale of utter and hopeless poverty, told in these few words. But how explain the terms of the divine command to Elias, while yet he was in his retreat in the torrent-bed of the Carith, "Arise, and go to Sarephta of

the Sidonians, and dwell there; for I have commanded a widow-woman there to feed thee"?

We must not understand thereby a "command" uttered by word or in a vision: it is by enlightening the mind of this poor idolater, and by sweetly disposing her heart to forget her own dire distress at the appeal of his faint and footsore servant, that God will give all his worshipers a sublime instance of supernatural charity, and of the fulfillment, long before the days of Christ, of that command which is first and last in the law.

"And Elias said to her, Fear not, but go, and do as thou hast said: but first make for me of the same meal a little hearth-cake, and bring it to me, and after make for thyself and thy son. For thus saith the Lord the God of Israel, The pot of meal shall not waste, nor the cruse of oil be diminished, until the day wherein the Lord will give rain upon the face of the earth."

The sequel evidently shows that she is not certain of the speaker's identity. The fearful visitation from which Phœnicians and Hebrews were alike suffering was known to have been caused by a prophet of Israel, the deadly foe of Jezabel and Baal: his name was also widely famed throughout the afflicted countries. But it were hard to imagine the poorly-clad, wasted, and famishing wayfarer to be that Elias, at whose bidding this long drought has made of the lovely country around them a sun-dried waste, and the dire famine has prostrated man and beast. Still she knows, that, whether prophet or Nazarite, he and his class are at that moment hunted like wolves by the bloodhounds of the Queen of Samaria. This is the native land of that pitiless woman, whose vengeance can as surely strike its object in Sidon and Sarephta as in Jezrael or Jerusalem. And it is at the very gate of the city, where Jezabel's idolatrous countrymen are wont most to congregate, that the banned prophet now stands before her, in the eyes of all, asking for food and shelter. It is almost certain death to afford him either. But she will share with him both her lowly roof and the last morsel of bread left to her boy and herself.

"She went and did according to the word of Elias; and he ate, and she and her house: and from that day the pot of meal

wasted not, and the cruse of oil was not diminished, according to the word of the Lord which he spoke in the hand of Elias."

We remember with what reverent and bounteous hospitality Abraham and Sara welcomed the mysterious "three," who were angels in disguise. Sara and Abraham were, however, the possessors of princely wealth; and the banquet they spread before their heavenly guests was rewarded by the speedy fulfillment of their long-cherished and dearest hope. On the other hand, the widow of Sarephta had not even bread for the morrow when she opened her door to the persecuted servant of Jehovah; and, beside risking her life by sheltering him, she so far trusts in his word, and reverences the holy name that he invokes, as to feed him with the very last remnant of her little store. She is rewarded by the gift of faith in the one true and living God, which is to be confirmed and perfected by one of the mightiest miracles on record.

The widow's child, wasted, as it was not unnatural, by the long privations they had undergone, and stricken down by one of those maladies that ever follow fast on the heels of famine, was brought to death's door. "The sickness was very grievous, so that there was no breath left in him." Poor mother! she had, one might judge from all the circumstances of her life, married a Phœnician and an idolater, like herself. Upright, generous, true-hearted, as one may suppose her to have been by nature, there were such things in the moral atmosphere of her native land as must insensibly and irresistibly pervert the instincts of the noblest natures. Travelers in our day describe that same shore, desolate though it now be, as so lovely, and its climate as so enchanting, that their charms steal over the senses like a spell. How powerful and contaminating must their influence have been in the palmy days of Phœnician idolatry, when laws and institutions, private morals and public manners, men's thoughts, aims, hopes, fears, affections, and enjoyments, were all regulated according to the ideal of sensuality deified!

During the long stay that Elias made with the widow and her son, her faith in the God of Israel must have been continually strengthened by witnessing the permanence of the miracle per-

formed in her favor, and foretold by her guest. His life of prayer, unblemished purity, and rigorous abstinence, must have also given her an exalted idea of the religion he professed. Still the light dawned but slowly on a soul that had dwelt so long in worse than midnight darkness. We who know how imperfect and infirm was the faith of our Lord's chosen twelve after three years spent in his intimacy, while listening hourly to his teaching, and witnessing his greatest miracles, must not be surprised at the despair of the widowed mother, or her apparent want of faith in the prophet, when she sees her boy dead at her feet, and her grief vents itself in wild reproaches.

"And she said to Elias, What have I to do with thee, thou man of God? Art thou come to me that my iniquities should be remembered, and that thou shouldst kill my son?" It is the natural language of a soul filled suddenly with remorse, and of a motherly heart riven at the prospect of utter bereavement.

"And Elias said to her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him into the upper chamber where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried to the Lord, and said, O Lord, my God, hast thou afflicted also the widow, with whom I am, after a sort, maintained, so as to kill her son?"

From the expression in the text, it is permitted to think that the boy was not quite dead, though apparently so. "There was no breath left in him." Still it can scarcely be questioned that it was a case of real, not apparent death. The commiseration and charity of Elias prelude those of his disciple Elisæus, toward the Sunamite, as does the miracle of the master foreshadow that of his disciple.

Elias folds the cold body in his embrace thrice in succession, repeating his fervent supplication to the Lord of life. "And the Lord heard the voice of Elias. . . . And [he] took the child, and brought him down from the upper chamber to the house below, and delivered him to his mother, and said to her, Behold, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elias, Now, by this, I know that thou art a man of God, and the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true."

Her reward is now perfect; divine grace has done its work; mind and heart are bound, henceforth, to the Lord of life by a faith so strong that nothing can shake it. Her grateful soul is ready, in return for the divine mercies, to bear any suffering, or to make any sacrifice.

It is the Jewish tradition, and one not without its likelihood, that the boy afterward attached himself to his benefactor, became his servant and companion in all his wanderings, and that the widow did not oppose her son's calling to a life of abnegation and peril.

When, long ages after the widow's day, the crusaders possessed themselves of Palestine, they sought out Sarephta, and built a chapel on the spot revered as the site of her house. That, like many other monuments of their brief sway, has entirely disappeared. Like Tyre and Sidon and Byblos, and all the proud Phœnician cities that gemmed the white shore of the Mediterranean, not a monument, and scarcely the fragment of a ruin, remains. The modern village of Surafend has crept up the hillside to the farthest extremity of what were once the suburbs of the populous and thrifty city. But to the beach, once hallowed by the tread of the great prophet's weary feet, clings the sweet remembrance of his tender pity, and of the widow of Sarephta's charity.

Mighty commonwealths that then ruled along these coasts have vanished; kingdoms have arisen and fallen there; the armies of the Christian West and Paynim East have alternately upheld there the supremacy of cross or crescent: but like the pot of meal that wasted not, and the widow's cruse of oil that never diminished, the healthful influence of supernatural virtues there practiced flows in a perennial spring from the white cliffs of Sarephta.

XV.

The Lady of Sunam.

OF late we have been like pilgrims journeying through sandy wastes, and wildernesses of barren, sunburned rock: we have been amid the storms and whirlwinds of the desert, and beheld appalling scenes of destruction and blood. We can now seat ourselves beneath the palm-trees of Sunam, by the side of its cool perennial spring, and allow all the soothing influences of the beautiful earth around us, and the calm bright skies above, to creep upon every outward and inward sense.

Sunam was situated three miles north of Jezrahel, on the southern extremity of Little Hermon, with Endor at the foot of the opposite declivity. At Sunam, the Philistine army had encamped before attacking Saul at Gelboe; for at Sunam there was shade and water and provisions in abundance; and to this day Sunam's cornfields are among the finest in the world, nor have its springs been dried up by the deep changes at the surface of the soil during the lapse of so many ages. To the south-west, above the plain of Esdraelon, rise the majestic slopes of Mount Carmel, on which stood the altar of Jehovah, cast down by Jezabel, and made so memorable by the sacrifice of Elias, and the slaughter of the priests of Baal.

While the Phœnician queen still ruled supreme at Samaria and Jezrahel, and the whole northern kingdom could scarcely number seven thousand adherents of Jehovah, there dwelt in the beautiful and peaceful Sunam, with their cornfields almost touching the vineyard of Naboth, a wealthy and powerful

Hebrew and his childless wife, both faithful to the God of their fathers.

Their name has perished; but the memory of their generous deeds, and the supernatural reward bestowed upon them, shall never die, like some of those rare and exquisite flowers, the masterpieces of Nature's hand, that display their loveliness, and shed their perfume on some sequestered dell in Palestine, but have never met the eye, or received a name of science.

Elias had not yet been taken up to his rest, and Elisæus, his disciple and successor, was helping him to withstand, in both of the Hebrew kingdoms, the malignant influence exercised by Jezabel and her daughter. In his rapid and weary journeyings from place to place, Elisæus had great need of caution to escape the ubiquitous spies of "the Phœnician." The altar of God on Carmel was still, however, his central place of worship and sacrifice, and, coming there for the high feasts and the beginning of each month, he had need of some safe shelter in the neighborhood. He chose it in Sunam, almost beneath the eye of Jezabel, and within hearing of the daily orgies celebrated by herself and her priests in the temple of Baal and the grove of Ashtarte.

"There was a day when Elisæus passed by Sunam: now there was a great woman there who detained him to eat bread; and, as he passed often that way, he turned into her house to eat bread. And she said to her husband, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, who often passeth by us. Let us, therefore, make him a little chamber, and put a little bed in it for him, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick, that, when he cometh to us, he may abide there."

The prophet and his attendant, like Elias before them, needed but little, and were content with that poverty of all things, which left them dependent on God alone, and ever ready to speed whithersoever the divine service called them. The generous lady and her husband gave the man of God such accommodation as they knew would alone be acceptable to him. But it was the spirit of faith that prompted them to find him a permanent resting-place within their home, where none could intrude

upon his life of prayer and meditation, where he would be safe from Jezabel's emissaries, and where they might minister to his wants both reverently and lovingly.

Elisæus continued for some time to enjoy the sweet repose of this shelter, and the unabating attentions of his hosts, when he bethought him of offering some requital. It was just after the triumph of the allied kings of Israel, Juda, and Edom, over Moab, obtained principally through Elisæus.

"And he said to Giezi, his servant, Call this Sunamitess. And when he had called her, and she stood before him, he said to his servant, Say to her, Behold, thou hast diligently served us in all things: what wilt thou have me to do for thee? Hast thou any business? and wilt thou that I speak to the king, or to the general of the army? And she answered, I dwell in the midst of my own people."

All around her are her own flesh and blood: she is, probably, their acknowledged head: at any rate, they are her people, bound to her by every dearest tie, and adding to their natural affection veneration for her known virtues. What can she or her household need of royal favor? Or how could they exchange their true native independence for the patronage of the mightiest?

But there is one chief blessing lacking to this hospitable roof and its more than princely masters: no child gladdens the heart of that lady, so well fitted to perform a mother's duties. It is remarkable that Elisæus knew nothing till then of that circumstance; and it enables one to see how the man of God went and came on his saving errands, solely intent on his Master's interests, and having neither eyes nor ears for mere worldly concerns. But he is no sooner apprised of the truth than he promises his benefactress that she, too, should soon taste the joys of motherhood. The prospect thus opened before one whose life has hitherto been one of solitary but cheerful devotion to her husband, and to every claim of household duty and neighborly charity, overcomes her. "Do not," she exclaims, "I beseech thee, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie to thy handmaid."

But the event proved the truth of the promise. An heir was born to the faithful and generous hosts of the homeless prophet.

"And the child grew. And on a certain day, when he went out to his father to the reapers, he said to his father, My head acheth, my head acheth." It was undoubtedly the effect of sunstroke.

"But he [the father] said to his servant, Take him, and carry him to his mother. And when he had . . . brought him to his mother, she sat him on her knees until noon, and then he died."

Ah, tired heart, childless again after the brief, deep joys and golden hopes of these few years! As he lay moaning on her knees, and clasped to her bursting heart, she must have said that God, who is good and faithful, did not mean to mock her with so short a fruition.

"And she went up, and laid him upon the bed of the man of God, and shut the door: and, going out, she called her husband and said, Send with me, I beseech thee, one of thy servants and an ass, that I may run to the man of God, and come again." She is too considerate to tell him of the calamity that has befallen them; and he has not, probably, given a serious thought to the boy's cry of pain. "And he said to her, Why dost thou go to him? To-day is neither new moon nor sabbath. She answered, I will go."

In this lady, as painted here, every line indicates one used to rule, and to rule by the ascendency of her virtues; but it is her absolute trust in God that shines forth most resplendently. He it is, who, by a miracle, gave her the boy she has just lost; and she will force him to restore him to her arms.

"And she saddled an ass, and commanded her servant, Drive, and make haste, make no stay in going. And do that which I bid thee." Some sixteen miles separate her from the well-known spot on Carmel, where Elisæus has appointed all who need his advice or help to come to him on certain days. From his station on the mountain-side, he looks down on the roads that lead from both Jezrahel and Sunam.

"So she went forward, and came to the man of God to Mount Carmel: and, when the man of God saw her coming towards [him], he said to Giezi, his servant, Behold that Sunamitess. Go, therefore, to meet her, and say to her, Is all well with thee, and with thy husband, and with thy son? And she answered, Well."

It is not Giezi she has come to seek; nor to him will she tell her tale of grief, or address her petition. So she passes him by, with the customary answer to all salutations, and hastens to his master.

"And when she came to the man of God to the mount, she caught hold on his feet; and Giezi came to remove her. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is in anguish, and the Lord hath hid it from me. . . . And she said to him, Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say to thee, Do not deceive me? Then he said to Giezi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thy hand, and go. If any man meet thee, salute him not; and, if any man salute thee, answer him not; and lay my staff upon the face of the child."

The servant departs without a word, or a moment's delay. But it is not the servant's aid that the anguished mother has come to seek. She is still kneeling there at the prophet's feet, and exclaims, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. He arose, therefore, and followed her."

Giezi's selfish and avaricious nature was not one that could wield, to any good purpose, the prophet's staff, the symbol of Christ's saving power; and perhaps that bereaved mother had already had more than one opportunity of studying Giezi's disposition. It was in vain that the hireling "laid the staff upon the face of the child, . . . there was no voice nor sense." He returns, meets Elisæus on the way, and tells him, "The child is not risen."

While we must leave the mother to her grief, or, rather, to struggle with God in silent prayer, we shall assist at one of the sublimest miracles of faith and charity recorded in the Old Testament.

With that modesty, that hatred of display so characteristic of him, Elisæus, or Elisha, whose name means "God is salvation," "went into the house, and, behold, the child lay dead on his bed. And, going in, he shut the door upon him, and upon the child, and prayed to the Lord."

In that fervid climate, with a July sun filling the air with fire, putrefaction follows swiftly after death. The sorrowing mother

took no thought of spices or embalmment when she placed her treasure on the prophet's bed, locked the door of the chamber, and sped away to Carmel. When she returned with the man of God, the odor of the grave filled the house. But Elisæus, in his work of mercy, is not to be repelled by even the loathsomeness of incipient putrefaction. He embraces the dead child: "And he put his mouth upon his mouth, and his hands upon his hands, and his eyes upon his eyes." The first faint warmth of returning animation rewarded the heroic minister of God for this victory over his repugnance. But, although his work of mercy was scarcely half accomplished, nature demanded that he should seek a purer air. "Then he returned, and walked in the house once to and fro; and he went up" to perfect what he had so divinely begun. Again he overcomes nature's most violent repulsion, and takes the body to his arms. "And the child gaped seven times, and opened his eyes." We read further on (chap. xiii.), how the body of Elisæus, in the springtide immediately following his death, gave life to a dead man who was hurriedly thrown into his open grave at the approach of a band of Moabite robbers. Can we marvel that his living body should have the same power?

He was in this action, throughout, the living type of the Saviour God, who, at the prayer of the true and only mother of humanity, the Church, comes to every one of us when stricken by deadly sin in body and soul. He, the Lord and the Life-giver, finding us lying at the door of the eternal death, without life or hope, applies to us all the merits and fruits of his own labors and death, applies HIMSELF to us, in body and in soul, in his whole human nature and his godhead, to raise us to life. He loathes not the corruption of sin and death in us, but takes us to his embrace, his lips to our lips, his transpierced heart to ours, seven times in succession to mark the sevenfold efficacy imparted in his sacraments, till we rise up again living men, — to live to God, and attain the full stature of true children of God.

When the miracle is performed, Elisæus throws open the door of his chamber. "And he called Giezi, and said to him, Call this Sunamitess. And she, being called, went in to him; and he said,

Take up thy son. She came, and fell at his feet, and worshiped upon the ground, and took up her son, and went out."

She had the reward of heroic faith. But there are other trials and rewards in store for her and her household. One may conclude, — from the hospitality extended by this lady to one whom she took at first to be an ordinary wayfarer, and then found to be a holy man, and finally knew to be the mighty prophet of Israel, — that her house and hand were ever open to the needs of all. God, who will not allow his own to seek even in this life any other adequate reward than himself, deprived that same great-souled, large-hearted, open-handed woman of her home.

A famine of seven years' duration was sent upon the land in punishment of the people's manifold infidelities; and God revealed its coming to Elisæus. And he "spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go, thou and thy household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst find; for the Lord hath called a famine, and it shall come upon the land seven years."

They migrated to the fruitful land of the Philistines in the south, and abode there till plenty had revisited their own native valley. In their absence, their home and possessions had found other masters, who refused to acknowledge their claims. The widow (for such, apparently, she had been for some time) and her son repaired to Samaria to lay their grievance before the king. And here we have to admire God's wonderful disposition of events.

At that very juncture, the king, who was, after the Eastern fashion, wont to hold public audience daily for the redress of all wrongs, had Giezi by his side, and, moved by some recent prodigy performed by his master, questioned him about their past career. "Tell me all the great things that Elisæus hath done. And, when he was telling the king how he had raised one dead to life, the woman appeared whose son he had restored to life, crying to the king for her house and her lands. And Giezi said, My lord, O King, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisæus raised to life. And the king asked the woman, and she told him. And the king appointed her an eunuch, say-

ing, Restore her all that is hers, and all the revenues of the lands, from the day that she left the land till this present."

Thus, through all these years, when hope had been growing fainter and fainter, and the weariness of exile and the burthen of distress constantly greater, He who remembers a cup of cold water given in his name to the chance passer-by treasured up the memory of that widow's every good deed, and kept guard over her home and her son's inheritance, and restored them all in due time, with "the revenues of the lands" down to the hour when the royal award was given.

XVI.

The Little Maid of Israel.

WHICH of the tribes composing the kingdom of Israel could boast of having given birth to the lowly captive or slave-girl, whose story comes into the sacred narrative, beside that of the lady of Sunam? She is the representative of a class of souls, which, since true religion has been a living institution upon earth, have been its obscure and efficacious apostles in the homes to which exile or captivity led them. And yet this is not a tale of fiction: its heroine is only mentioned once, and that to speed her master on an errand that ends in his becoming a devoted follower of Jehovah, and leads thus to incalculable consequences. There are some who contribute blindly and unconsciously to the spread of truth, like the savage from the plains, who carries, unawares, the acorn, hidden in the folds of his hunting-blanket, to the barren wilderness beyond, where it falls, and takes root, and becomes the parent of a forest; and there are some who plant the precious germ of truth in the hearts within their reach, and industriously foster its growth there, by word and life-giving examples, till it bears ripe and undying fruit. And of the latter was she of whom mention is made in the Fourth Book of Kings, chap. v.

"Naaman, general of the army of the King of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable; for by him the Lord gave deliverance to Syria: and he was a valiant man and rich, but a leper. Now, there had gone out robbers from Syria, and had led away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid, and she waited upon Naaman's wife. And she said to her mistress,

I wish my master had been with the prophet that is in Samaria: he would certainly have healed him of the leprosy which he hath."

Here we have power, station, wealth, military fame, in a household where the master's glory is obscured, and all his future blighted, by the loathsome and dreaded scourge of leprosy. Husband and wife, the successful general and minister, and the companion of all his renown and state, are supremely wretched through this one defilement; while the little waiting-maid, rudely torn away from her cherished home and loved ones, is supremely rich in the one treasure that they have not, — faith in the living God. This faith has been the stay and shield of that child — she has not emerged from girlhood yet — amid the wild robber band who have wasted her home: it has set a stamp of unearthly beauty upon her childish features, has won the affection of her mistress; and now it will help to gain her master's soul to God, and, with him, the souls of many others.

The "little maid's" word has such weight, that the King of Syria prepares a splendid embassy under Naaman, intrusts him with a letter to Joram, Jezabel's youngest son; and Naaman sets out, taking "with him ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment," as offerings to Elisæus. Joram, who sees in the Naaman before him the same mighty warrior who had dealt Achab his death-blow, and defeated the allied kings at Ramoth-Galaad, is filled with dismay, believing that Naaman's demand to be cured of the leprosy is only a pretext for picking a quarrel with himself. "Am I God, to be able to kill, and give life, that this man [the King of Syria] hath sent to me to heal a man of his leprosy?" Elisæus, hearing of his dismay, sends to Joram, "Why hast thou rent thy garments? Let him come to me, and let him know that there is a prophet in Israel. And Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisæus. And Elisæus sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and thy flesh shall recover health, and thou shalt be clean."

The man of God cares but little for the magnificent train at his door, and for the princely presents that it bears to his feet.

He does not sell God's graces for silver, or gold, or precious raiment: he will have Naaman know it, and signifies through a messenger what the noble Syrian has to do. The latter, indignant at the seeming discourtesy, and still more so at the simple remedy prescribed, would have gone away. But "his servants came to him, and said, Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it: how much rather what he now hath said to thee, Wash, and thou shalt be clean."

The simple-minded soldier is open to reason: he complies with the prophet's bidding, is perfectly healed, and now stands in the presence of Elisæus at Samaria. "In truth, I know there is no other God in all the earth, but only in Israel: I beseech thee, therefore, take a blessing of thy servant." The presents are laid at Elisæus' feet. "As the Lord liveth before whom I stand, I will receive none. And, when he pressed him, he still refused. And Naaman said, As thou wilt; but, I beseech thee, grant to me, thy servant, to take from hence two mules' burthen of earth: for thy servant will not henceforth offer holocaust or victim to other gods but to the Lord."

Thus has the advice of the "little maid" been attended with every blessing; and her master is on his way to Damascus, bearing back not only perfect health, but the priceless pearl of the true faith, and, what is scarcely less precious, admiration for the incomparable disinterestedness of him to whom God had intrusted the dispensation of his healing power.

Now, mark how the greed and mendacity of one servant offsets the simple faith of the other, and almost destroys the impression produced on Naaman and his train by the great prophet's unselfishness.

Giezi, enraged at seeing all that glittering heap of treasure borne away from his master's door, runs after Naaman, and, by a bold falsehood, obtains a part of the coveted wealth, which two of Naaman's attendants help him to convey secretly to his apartment. The prophet has had supernatural knowledge of this fraud, and questions Giezi, who tells a second lie to cover the first, as well as his ill-gotten treasure.

"But Elisæus said, Was not my heart present when the man turned back from his chariot to meet thee? So now thou hast received money, and received garments, to buy olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants. But the leprosy of Naaman shall also stick to thee, and to thy seed for ever. And he [Giezi] went out from him a leper as white as snow."

It is terrible. But such examples are necessary, to teach all who would serve God in the high perfection of the prophetic or priestly office, that greed and avarice are, in God's sight, nay, in the eyes of all clear-sighted men, more hideous than even the white leprosy of Egypt.

But what of the "little maid"? Let us hope that her grateful master rewarded her with freedom, sent her back to the dear home of her childhood, and bestowed on her as a dowry the gold and silver and precious raiment declined by Elisæus.

XVII.

Judith.

WE have come back once more to an epoch in Hebrew history when women of the race of Miriam and Debbora become the chosen instruments of national deliverance. Of her whose name stands at the head of this chapter, there was but one opinion in the early Christian ages. St. Clement, one of the first bishops of Rome, and, like all these successors of the apostles, a martyr, praises Judith; Origen, a martyr's son, and himself a sufferer for the faith, calls her "heroic in deeds, and of all women the most illustrious;" while St. Jerome, who more than any other early writer labored successfully in the cause of biblical literature, and in infusing into the ladies of Christian Rome Judith's lofty spirit of faith and heroic self-denial, thus speaks of her in his prologue to her history, "Accept from my hand in the widowed Judith the perfect model of chastity." And elsewhere, "Her body was wasted by frequent fasting; yet she mourned not for her departed husband, but prepared herself by corporeal austerities for the coming of the Bridegroom. I see her armed with the sword, and her right hand red with blood: I distinguish the head of Holofernes, which she has borne away as a trophy from the midst of a hostile army, and Chastity, in her person, cutting off the head of Lust. Then I behold her putting off forthwith her splendid robes, and resuming the weeds of her glorious poverty, more beautiful than the artificial adornments of worldly fashion" (*Epist. x. ad Furiam*).

She belongs to the time immediately following the return of

the Jews from captivity, when Joachim (or Eliachim) was high priest, and held the chief authority in the nation, and when Xerxes, after the ignominious failure of his expedition to Greece, still held the throne of Persia. Phraortes (Arphaxad) ruled in Ecbatana; and, in Assyria and Babylonia, a satrap of Xerxes, having thrown off his master's yoke, and beaten Phraortes, aimed at universal empire, and aped the old style of the early Assyrian and Babylonian kings, who would have themselves worshiped by the subject nations as sole gods and sole monarchs.

In the first intoxication of what he deemed resistless power, the new Assyrian potentate, called (after the great king of that name) Nebuchadnezzar by the inspired writer, assembled a large army, and sent it under Holofernes to reduce to his sway the whole of Syria and Palestine, with the adjacent peoples. This force poured like a devastating torrent over the Syrian plains, capturing every stronghold, sending off to Assyria the populations spared by the sword, setting fire to the corn-fields, cutting down the vineyards, forests, and groves, and leveling to the ground the Temples of Baal and Ashtarte. His army being swelled by auxiliaries from Asia Minor, he swept down the valley of the Jordan, and around through the eastern desert, till his troops concentrated in the territory of the Ammonites, before making an attack on the disorganized remnants of the two Hebrew kingdoms.

But though sadly reduced in numbers, unarmed, and for generations unused to warfare, the Israelites had now, after all their terrible sufferings, one element of incalculable strength, — unity of faith. They were all devoted worshipers of Jehovah; and this circumstance was to prove their salvation. Nevertheless, they did not neglect any of the measures of preparation that human prudence suggested. They sent for aid to all who were interested in making common cause with them; fortified their towns, and filled them with provisions, and seized upon every pass and height that could offer an available position of defense, or arrest the progress of the invader.

In all these patriotic exertions, they were directed by the high priest. "And all the people cried to the Lord with great

earnestness; and they humbled their souls in fastings and prayers, both they and their wives. And the priests put on hair-cloths, and they caused the little children to lie prostrate before the temple of the Lord; and the altar of the Lord they covered with hair-cloth. And they cried to the Lord the God of Israel with one accord, that their children might not be made a prey, and their wives carried off, and their cities destroyed, and their holy things profaned. . . . Then Eliachim, the high priest of the Lord, went about all Israel, and spoke to them."

The national heart was now with God; and with the perfect unity of purpose that their faith inspired, they did so much, so rapidly, and so effectually, that, as the Assyrians advanced, they were astonished to find the country bristling with bands of defenders. The attack was directed against the cities and points of communication to the south of the plain of Esdraelon.

"And it was told Holofernes . . . that the children of Israel prepared themselves to resist, and had shut up the ways of the mountains." The Moabites and Ammonites had been carried away into the stream of the Assyrian invasion: they were expected to be most useful auxiliaries in effecting the subjugation of their traditional enemies. When their chiefs were summoned to council, Achior, prince of the Ammonites, in a discourse of remarkable beauty and eloquence, gave a summary of past Hebrew history from the call of Abraham to the captivity of Egypt, and throughout all their vicissitudes afterward as a commonwealth and a kingdom. "There was no one that triumphed over this people. . . . But as often as beside their own God they worshiped any other, they were given to spoil, and to the sword, and to reproach. . . . But of late returning to the Lord their God from the different places wherein they were scattered, they are come together, and are gone up into all these mountains, and possess Jerusalem again where their holies are. Now, therefore, my lord, search if there be any iniquity of theirs in the sight of their God: [if so] let us go up to them, because their God will surely deliver them to thee. . . . But, if there be no offense of this people in the sight of their God, we can not resist them, because their God will defend them, and we shall be a reproach to the whole earth."

Achior knew well the settled belief of his own race, and of all the other hereditary foes of Israel: he only recites to the arrogant Assyrian the lesson which Moab and Ammon had learned from the experience of centuries. But there is forthwith a storm in the council of war. Holofernes, to punish the speaker, declares that he shall share the fate of the Israelites already doomed to extermination or captivity. Achior is led toward Bethulia to be shut up in the fated city. But his Assyrian escort are driven back by the Bethulian skirmishers, and, "turning out of the way by the side of the mountain, they tied Achior to a tree, hand and foot, and so left him bound with ropes, and returned to their master." He is loosed by the Israelites, taken in to the city, and relates, in public assembly, the cause of his being delivered up to them by Holofernes.

The besieged, though not a little impressed with the awful fate that must befall them if the Assyrians should be victorious, were fired with fresh ardor by the noble conduct of the Ammonite chief. Ozias, the chief magistrate of the city, invited him to his house, and entertained him and "all the ancients" at "a great supper." This over, the people were called together, and the night was spent in prayer.

We are never to forget that the whole history of the Hebrew people is one of supernatural providence and intervention. This is the fact which alone sheds an intelligible light on their records: to take the supernatural away from the life of the nation, and to try to read or to explain it by the mere light of natural laws or reason, would be to go to a mountain-top in the darkest hour of a moonless and starless night, and, with the aid of a single taper, to descry the magnificences of the landscape spread out beneath and around; or to discern the proper relations of city and hamlet, river and lake, earth and sea, when the spectator can scarcely see his own extended hand. Strike out miracles, the prodigies of God's power and mercy, and much more, the visitations of his justice, from the pages of the Bible, from the history of the synagogue, and even from that of the Church, — and you extinguish the only light that enables you to discern the elementary facts and their relations.

Of course, Holofernes did not believe in the living God: the only deity he acknowledged and worshiped was might, successful and pitiless might, as embodied and adored in his own Nebuchadnezzar. With the dawn of the next day, he ordered his vast army to assault Bethulia, in order to test the might of the God of Israel, and to dispel, perhaps, any discontent or hesitancy occasioned among his Ammonite and Moabite auxiliaries by the discourse of Achior, and the unseemly treatment dealt out to him.

Others there are among these same auxiliaries quite as convinced as Achior of the facts he so eloquently set forth, but anxious to conceal their fears of the final issue, or to prove their zeal to the conqueror by placing their familiar knowledge of the localities at his service. By their advice, the aqueduct to the south of the city is destroyed, and every spring in its immediate neighborhood is strongly guarded by the besiegers.

Bethulia itself (most probably the modern *Sanûr*) crowned an isolated mass of rock, situated about three miles from Dothan, and seven miles from Engannim (*Jenûr*). It rises abruptly from the plain, and, being very near the only pass that leads from Engannim and the plain of Esdraelon southward to Jerusalem, it became important to Holofernes to secure its possession.

The numerous battalions of Holofernes assailed in vain the impregnable position that has defied more than once the resources of modern warfare; but before famine and thirst the strongest walls must fall. And there were among the crowd some faint hearts, lacking in confidence in the divine aid, who soon communicated to others their fears and their cowardice. The besieged assembled tumultuously, after twenty days of heroic endurance, and demanded that Ozias should surrender the city to the Assyrians, rather than suffer any longer the slow tortures of thirst and hunger; better be led away into bondage, or be slain swiftly by the sword, than see women and children endure further horrors.

Ozias, though much moved by the tears and entreaties of the multitude, besought them to wait for five days more. It was the report of this assemblage, and of the determination Ozias had come to, that brought Judith from the privacy of her home, before the public gaze.

She was of the tribe of Simeon, and had been a widow three years and six months when the crisis occurred in the siege of Bethulia. "She was exceedingly beautiful; and her husband left her great riches, and very many servants, and large possessions of herds of oxen, and flocks of sheep. And she was greatly renowned among all, because she feared the Lord very much; neither was there any one that spoke an ill word of her."

Thus widowed in her thirty-sixth year, and childless, she gave herself up to a life of retirement and asceticism; for it was not men only who practised the strict self-denial of the Nazarites. This tendency in Judith must have been strengthened by the circumstances through which she and her parents had passed. She had, in all probability, been born in exile, and passed her childhood and early girlhood amid the scenes of Babylonian idolatry, learning to hate alike the religion and the tyranny of her people's oppressors. There breathes throughout the whole Book of Judith a fierce spirit of patriotism and piety. The age itself was one of continual conflict, — of most unjust and unprovoked aggression on the part of the powerful, and of desperate resistance on the part of the weak. Where extermination or lifelong slavery in far-off countries was the lot of those who succumbed in such a struggle as was now waging around the crags of Bethulia, it is not to be wondered at, if the weaker party had recourse to the weapons of the weak, in repelling or crushing an impious invader.

During her widowhood, Judith had imbibed precisely that spirit of exalted piety, which, in a moment of national peril, would send her forth to play the part of Debbora. She had "made herself a private chamber in the upper part of her house, in which she abode, shut up with her maids. And she wore haircloth upon her loins, and fasted all the days of her life, except the sabbaths, and new moons, and the feasts of the house of Israel." This austerity of life in one still young, most beautiful, wealthy, and influential, was the fit preparation for the glorious work she was inspired to undertake.

"When, therefore, she had heard that Ozias had promised that he would deliver up the city after the fifth day, she sent to the

ancients. . . . And they came to her, and she said to them, What is this word by which Ozias hath consented to give up the city to the Assyrians, if within five days there come no aid to us? And who are you that tempt the Lord? . . . You have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed him a day, according to your pleasure. But, forasmuch as the Lord is patient, let us be penitent for this same thing, and with many tears let us beg his pardon."

Yes, to humble themselves before God for having so much as entertained the thought of yielding to their pitiless enemy, and for having so much as doubted for one moment that God would fight with them against yonder impious bands; this is the very language calculated to raise the drooping spirits of a famished population, and to enkindle a divine enthusiasm in the sinking souls of men. And who better than a woman revered for her piety as much as she was admired for her beauty could wield such persuasion in that critical hour?

"We have not followed the sins of our fathers [she continues], who forsook their God, and worshiped strange gods. For which crime they were given up to their enemies, to the sword, and to pillage, and to confusion: but we know no other God but him."

She sends forth the ancients to repeat these inspired words to the people, and thereby to "comfort their hearts," bidding them remind their townsfolk that former invasions of a foreign foe were permitted, not only as a test and punishment of apostasy, but as a trial to which God put the fidelity of his best-beloved among the patriarchs. So was it with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and many others. They remained faithful; while others, who became impatient, and murmured under trial, "were destroyed by the destroyer."

While these admirable sentiments are communicated to the people, and refresh their spirits like a draught of water from the cool spring for which they were panting, Judith loses no time in communicating to Ozias and the other leaders the project that she has conceived. Had the starving men of the city, instead of growing faint-hearted with extremity of suffering, risen with it in courage and determination, Judith would not have hesitated

that moment to rush at their head upon the slumbering hordes of Holofernes. But men who have wavered once, and pronounced the word surrender, are not the men to follow to battle Debbora, or Gedeon, or Judith. A woman and her maid shall take on themselves the perils and the glory of a people's deliverance.

"And Judith said to them, As you know that what I have been able to say is of God; so that which I intend to do, prove ye if it be of God, and pray that God may strengthen my design. You shall stand at the gate this night, and I will go out with my maid-servant: and pray ye, that, as you have said, in five days the Lord may look down upon his people Israel. But I desire that you search not into what I am doing, and, till I bring you word, let nothing else be done, but to pray for me to the Lord our God."

The chiefs withdrew to encourage their subordinates; and "Judith went into her oratory, and, putting on haircloth, laid ashes on her head; and, falling down prostrate before the Lord, she cried to the Lord, saying, O Lord God of my father Simeon, who gavest him a sword to execute vengeance, . . . assist, I beseech thee, O Lord God, me a widow. For thou hast done [wonderful] things of old, and hast devised one thing after another; and what thou hast designed hath been done. . . . Look upon the camp of the Assyrians now, as thou wast pleased to look upon the camp of the Egyptians, when they pursued armed after thy servants, trusting in their chariots, and in their horsemen, and in a multitude of warriors. But thou lookedst over their camp, and darkness wearied them. The deep held their feet, and the waters overwhelmed them. So may it be with these also, O Lord. . . . Lift up thy arm as from the beginning. . . . Bring to pass, O Lord, that his pride may be cut off with his own sword. Let him be caught in the net of his own eyes, . . . and do thou strike him by the graces of the words of my lips. Give me constancy in my mind, that I may despise him; and fortitude, that I may overthrow him. For this will be a glorious monument for thy name, when he shall fall by the hand of a woman."

It is clear, from this touching prayer, that Judith contemplates offering herself, a woman free to contract matrimony, to the eyes

of Holofernes, whose connubial love she seems sure of winning. She is not unconscious of her own beauty, and she will have the Assyrian general solicit her hand in lawful wedlock. This is one part of her stratagem: it will place him in her power. The other part, "the graces of the words of my lips," is the tale which she intends to tell him about the motives which lead her to seek the Assyrian camp. Whether, in lawful war, such stratagems are allowed, military men can best decide; and whether the tale of Judith exceeded the bounds of what would be allowable in a licit stratagem, must be discussed by the wives and daughters of soldiers and the brave and true men of whom they are so proud. But Holofernes did not pretend to wage a legitimate war, any more than the pirate who robs defenseless vessels on the ocean, murders their crews, and then burns them, or any more than the robber Bedaween, whose trade is to lie in wait for caravans on the desert.

No man in these ships but would deem it just and meritorious to destroy the pirate single handed; no man or woman in the peaceful and defenseless caravan, but would turn the sword or the spear of the robber against his own breast.

The heroic woman rises from the spot wet with her tears, exchanges her penitential weeds for her most splendid attire; no ornament is omitted that can set off to the utmost advantage a beauty that God had made transcendent for the purpose she now contemplated. "And the Lord also gave her more beauty; because all this dressing up did not proceed from sensuality, but from virtue: and therefore the Lord increased this her beauty, so that she appeared to all men's eyes incomparably lovely."

She thus passes with her maid through the crowd, divided between pity and admiration. At the gate she meets Ozias and the ancients, and her marvelous beauty strikes them with astonishment.

"But they asked her no question; only they let her pass, saying, The God of our fathers give thee grace; and may he strengthen all the counsel of thy heart with his power, that Jerusalem may glory in thee, and thy name may be in the number of the holy and just. And they that were there said, all with

one voice, So be it, so be it. But Judith, praying to the Lord, passed through the gates, she and her maid."

To the Assyrian outposts she announces herself as a transfugitive, and is forthwith introduced to the general. Holofernes betrays his admiration so visibly, that the officers in attendance exclaim, "Who can despise the people of the Hebrews, who have such beautiful women, that we should not think it worth our while, for their sakes, to fight against them?" The purpose, thus openly avowed, of making war on the most peaceful peoples, because their women are beautiful, and the degraded bondage thus held out in prospect both to Judith and her countrywomen, must have chilled her heart with horror. But, the first thrill of this secret emotion over, the heroic woman must have been steeled to her purpose by the brutal admiration of that crew, and the still more brutal avowal of their hopes.

She takes time to collect herself during the prostrations required by Oriental etiquette, listens calmly to the few sentences addressed to her by Holofernes, and then unfolds her stratagem. A terrible and threatening irony runs through this wily discourse, every sentence of which should be read interlined; for it is a woman's wit that is spreading the net in full view of this Assyrian bird of prey.

"Receive the words of thy handmaid; for, if thou wilt follow the words of thy handmaid, the Lord will do with thee a perfect thing." She exalts the greatness of the Assyrian monarch; flatters the manifold vanity of his general by enumerating his abilities, and praising his achievements; declares that one law governs God's conduct over his chosen people, to give them up to their enemies when they sin; that even now, through remembrance of their past transgressions, the fear of Holofernes is on the Bethulians; that, in their extremities of thirst and hunger, they are forming the design of drinking the blood of their cattle, and using for food the things offered in worship, — all of which entail deadly guilt. These are the secrets she has come to reveal.

"And I thy handmaid, knowing this, am fled from them [my people], and the Lord hath sent me to tell thee these very things. For I thy handmaid worship God even now that I am with thee;

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and thy handmaid will go out, and I will pray to God, and he will tell me when he will repay them for their sins; and I will come and tell thee, so that I may bring thee through the midst of Jerusalem, and thou shalt have all the people of Israel as sheep that have no shepherd, and there shall not so much as one dog bark against thee: because these things are told me by the providence of God."

Holofernes has fallen into the snare; and his servants are loud in praise of the speaker. "There is not such another woman upon earth in look, in beauty, and in sense of words." The tent in which the treasures are kept is assigned to Judith for her private abode: she is permitted to eat exclusively of the food that she has brought with her, and is allowed full liberty to go back and forth in the camp for three days, herself and her maid, for purposes of private worship.

"And she went out in the nights into the valley of Bethulia, and washed herself in a fountain of water. And, as she came up, she prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, that he would direct her way to the deliverance of his people. And, going in, she remained pure in the tent, until she took her own meat in the evening."

The last day of the term appointed for the surrender of Bethulia was now at hand. God had indeed watched over Judith. But, treated so far as a free lady and a princess, she is at length to be asked to become the wife of Holofernes. With Eastern satraps, the ceremonial of matrimony was at best but a simple one: it was simple even among the patriarchal families, as we have already seen; but in camps it was shorn of all external pomp and circumstance.

Holofernes, however, celebrates his approaching union by a grand banquet; and his chamberlain, Vagao, is bidden to go and ask the formal consent of Judith, and to solicit her presence to grace and crown these convivialities. This is what she has been praying for: the brutal intemperance of Holofernes and his generals will further her purpose to the desired end.

There she is, amid the splendors of the banquet, like an angel from another sphere, descended to reprove and punish the dark

deeds of these evil men. "And Holofernes said to her, Drink now, and sit down and be merry; for thou hast found favor before me. And Judith said, I will drink, my lord, because my life is magnified this day above all my days. And she took and eat and drank before him what her maid had prepared for her. And Holofernes was made merry on her occasion, and drank exceeding much wine, so much as he had never drunk in his life. And, when it was grown late, his servants made haste to their lodgings; and Vagao shut the chamber-doors, and went his way. And they were all overcharged with wine.

"And Judith was alone in the chamber. But Holofernes lay on his bed, fast asleep, being exceedingly drunk. And Judith spoke to her maid to stand without before the chamber, and to watch. And Judith stood before the bed, praying with tears, and the motion of her lips in silence, saying, Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, and in this hour look on the works of my hands, that, as thou hast promised, thou mayst raise up Jerusalem thy city; and that I may bring to pass that which I have purposed, having a belief that it might be done by thee."

The deed accomplished, she loosed from the pillars above the bed "the canopy, which was woven of purple and gold, with emeralds and precious stones," wrapped the head in it, and threw the headless trunk on the floor. "And after a while she went out, and delivered the head of Holofernes to her maid, and bade her put it into her wallet. And they two went out according to their custom, as if it were to prayer; and they passed the camp, and, having compassed the valley, they came to the gate of the city. And Judith from afar off cried to the watchmen upon the walls, Open the gates, for God is with us, who hath shown his power in Israel."

Bethulia is awake in an instant. The wretched citizens had retired to their rest that night in utter despair of all succor. The period fixed for Judith's return had well-nigh elapsed, and "they had now no hopes that she would come." But her cry was taken up by the watchmen on the walls, and spread with electric speed from street to street. "And all ran to meet her, from the least to the greatest; . . . and, lighting up lights, they all gathered

round about her. And she went up to a higher place, and commanded silence to be made. And, when all had held their peace, Judith said, Praise ye the Lord our God, who hath not forsaken them that hope in him. And by me his handmaid he hath fulfilled his mercy, which he promised to the house of Israel; and he hath killed the enemy of his people by my hand this night."

Something of the thrill of triumph and relief that ran through the listening multitude communicates itself to the reader, brought in spirit to this night-scene of rejoicing. Then the heroine, taking from the wallet the gory head of the destroyer of so many cities, held it up in the light of the torches. "Behold the head of Holofernes . . . and behold his canopy, wherein he lay in his drunkenness, where the Lord, our God, slew him by the hand of a woman. But, as the same Lord liveth, his angel hath been my keeper both going hence, and abiding there, and returning from thence hither. And the Lord hath not suffered me his handmaid to be defiled [by eating of meats offered to idols, or partaking in idolatrous rites], but hath brought me back to you without pollution of sin, rejoicing for his victory, for my escape, and for your deliverance. Give all of you glory to him, because he is good, because his mercy endureth for ever.

"And they all adored the Lord, and said to her, The Lord hath blessed thee by his power, because by thee he hath brought our enemies to nought. . . .

"And Achior, being called for, came; and Judith said to him, The God of Israel, to whom thou gavest testimony, that he revengeth himself of his enemies, he hath cut off the head [the chief] of all the unbelievers this night by my hand. . . . Behold the head of Holofernes!"

The sight of this terrible face, ghastly in death, amid the glare of all these lights, overcomes the brave Ammonite chief. But, having recovered himself, he bends in lowly reverence at the feet of the woman who stands there before him as the embodiment of divine power and justice. "Blessed art thou [he exclaims] by thy God in every tabernacle of Jacob; for in every nation which shall hear thy name, the God of Israel shall be magnified on occasion of thee."

The heroic lady, one might think, after the fearful trials of these five days, and the overwhelming emotions of that night, must feel the re-action in her womanly soul, and yield to the imperative need of immediate repose. No. She is the intellect and the arm of the nation in this battle for their life; and she will not know rest till the slumbering hordes of Holofernes are driven from the soil of Israel. The dawn is near at hand; and not one moment is to be lost. She bids them fix the head of Holofernes upon the walls, full in view of his host, and commands every man to arm. With the first beams of the rising sun the gates are to be thrown open; and all shall rush down to assault the Assyrian camp. So with the break of day, just as the distant summits of Thabor, and the crests of nearer Gelboe, were tinged with the golden rays of the sun, Bethulia poured out her multitude of warriors, faint-hearted and famished yesterday, buoyed up on that glorious morning by the consciousness of a vigor all divine: down the acclivity they rushed, with a shout that woke the echoes of the plain of Galilee.

The deep and general revel of that fatal night had left but few officers in a state to keep good watch. Surprised in the first drunken stupor of this terrible awakening, they hear the ever-approaching and increasing roar of the Bethulians, like that of some lake amid alpine snow-fields, that has been rising, rising, for years, and suddenly bursts through every barrier, and rushes down the Rhone Valley with a roar that warns distant hamlets and cities of coming destruction.

"Go in and awake him," say the Assyrian generals, as they hurriedly rush for orders to the closed tent of Holofernes, — "go in and awake him; for the mice, coming out of their holes, have presumed to challenge us to fight."

There is much hesitation and delay. At length the chamberlain Vagao ventures to enter, claps his hands to waken his master, and, receiving no answer, approaches, lifts the curtain, and perceives the lifeless trunk on the ground in a pool of blood.

There is a loud cry of terror; there is rending of garments, and weeping. The debauch of the night has left among all these warriors neither clear heads nor steady nerves "An intolerable

fear and dread fell upon them. . . . Courage and counsel fled from them; and . . . they thought only to save themselves by flight, . . . and fled by the ways of the fields and the paths of the hills, . . . leaving all things behind."

But at the voice of Ozias all Israel has risen; "and every country and every city sent their chosen young men armed after them." The sword, like that of God's avenging angel, flashed and smote in their rear, till their miserable remnants were far beyond Palestine.

"And Joachim the high priest came from Jerusalem to Bethulia with all his ancients to see Judith. And, when she was come out to him, they all blessed her with one voice, saying, Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people; for thou hast done manfully, and thy heart has been strengthened, because thou hast loved chastity. . . . Therefore, also, the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed for ever. And all the people said, So be it, so be it!"

During thirty days, the multitude were constantly occupied in gathering up the immense booty left behind by the Assyrians; and to Judith were allotted by the people all the personal effects and household treasures of Holofernes. Achior could not close his eyes to the visible demonstration of God's saving power in Judith's triumph. He and his kinsfolk openly professed the true faith, and became incorporated with God's people.

But a solemn national thanksgiving alone could fitly crown this great deliverance. Was it in Bethulia, or on the plain beneath, where a woman's arm had struck the blow for liberty; or in Jerusalem, as yet but partly restored, and amid the half-constructed walls of the new temple? It is most likely that the celebration was held in Jerusalem, where "all the people after the victory came to adore the Lord." All Israel came to swell the chorus, and gaze upon their deliverer. As was customary, Judith led the choir of women and maidens; the priests and warriors singing the alternate verses. Never, since the daughters of Israel stood around Miriam, above the avenging waters of the Red Sea, and sang their sublime hymn of deliverance, did the

nation's heart pour forth a loftier strain than in the following inspired song: —

"Begin ye to the Lord with timbrels;
Sing ye to the Lord with cymbals;
Tune unto him a new psalm;
Extol and call upon his name.
The Lord putteth an end to wars,
The Lord [Jehovah] is his name.
He hath set his camp in the midst of his people
To deliver us from the hand of all our enemies.
The Assyrian came out of the mountains from the north,
In the multitude of his strength:
His multitude stopped up the torrents;
And their horses covered the valleys.
He bragged that he would set my borders on fire,
And kill my young men with the sword,
To make my infants a prey,
And my virgins captive.
But the almighty Lord hath struck him,
And hath delivered him into the hands of a woman."

Judith laid the arms of Holofernes, and the canopy taken from his chamber, before the altar in the holy place. "And the people were joyful in the sight of the sanctuary; and for three months the joy of this victory was celebrated with Judith. And after those days every man returned to his house."

That Judith was ever after most honored in Bethulia, and "most renowned in all the land of Israel," was to be expected. She resumed her widow's weeds and retired life, appearing in public only at the great festivals, and lived in her deceased husband's house, a pattern of chastity and piety, dying in her one hundred and fifth year. She enfranchised the maid who had been her companion in Holofernes' camp, and was buried in Bethulia beside her husband. "And all the people mourned for her seven days. And all the time of her life there was none that troubled Israel, nor many years after her death."

XVIII.

Esther.

FROM the hill-forts of Palestine we pass to Susa, the splendid capital of the Persian empire, the capital, indeed, of the Eastern world, in the days of Xerxes, son of Darius Hystaspes; for the two immortal women, who in the royal palace of Susa, and on the plain of Bethulia, contributed to save the remnants of God's people, were both contemporaries, and one of them wife, of this same Xerxes. The name of Assuerus is identical with the *Khérshé* of the Persepolis inscriptions, and with the Xerxes and Cyaxares of the Greeks. This denomination, as belonging to a warlike sovereign or emperor, was given to all the ancient kings of Persia and Media.

Even after the restoration of the exiled Hebrews to the land of their fathers, inaugurated by Cyrus, and prosecuted under his successors, great numbers of them remained scattered through the provinces of the Persian empire. With them were large numbers of the other races inhabiting Syria, Palestine, and the neighboring countries. Such were the Amalekites, one of whom, Aman, was high in favor and position at the Persian court, and bore a principal part in the events here narrated.

It was, most probably, in the great assembly of vassal kings and imperial officials, held by Xerxes in the third year of his reign as a preliminary to the opening of the war against Greece, that occurred the incident of Queen Vasthi. The extravagance and folly that characterized her royal consort's behavior on this occasion tally exactly with his conduct at the Hellespont, when

he cruelly put to death the engineers who had constructed a bridge of boats between the opposite shores of Europe and Asia, because a furious storm had injured the work, and at the same time, with his own hand, lashed the sea for daring to thwart his will. These traits will help us toward appreciating the character and acts of him who shall be designated as Assuerus in these pages. The descriptions of the inspired text will enable us to form some idea of the abominable despotism under which the life of so many Asiatic populations was crushed out, and which was sought to be imposed at this very time upon the free commonwealths of Greece.

Susa (Susan and Shushan), "the city of lilies," was built even before the days of Abraham, in a lovely climate, and a country of unparalleled fertility and beauty, near the western slope of the great Bahktiyari Mountains. Under Cyrus and his successors, it shared with Persepolis the honor of being the favorite residence of the Persian court. The great palaces erected in both were counterparts of each other. Of the ruins of the latter, the world has most admirable drawings from the hand of modern artists; and its inscriptions have furnished materials of surpassing interest to the linguist and historian, while from Susa but a few fragments have been recovered. The site and plan of the palace of Assuerus and Esther have been traced out by English skill and perseverance. Let us endeavor to build up anew the reality, while following step by step the progress of the Oriental tragedy enacted thirty-five hundred years ago.

Within the capital of Xerxes-Assuerus, there are assembled all the kings who owe him fealty, with all his Persian and Median magnates, the governors of provinces, and the generals commanding his armies. His vain mind is filled with that insane vision of universal empire, the pursuit of which is to prove his ruin, and lead, in after-years, to the invasion of his own dominions by Alexander the Great. "He made a great feast . . . that he might show the riches . . . of his kingdom, and the greatness and boasting of his power, for . . . a hundred and fourscore days." But this lavish display of hospitality and magnificence was crowned by a general invitation to the citizens of Susa,

"from the greatest to the least." The coming war was to be made popular among all classes; for all had to be duly impressed, during these six months of splendid festivity, that Assuerus was truly "the king of kings," and that united Persia and Media had a right to the homage of the universe.

So the king "commanded a feast to be made seven days in the court of the garden," and in the adjoining grove, "planted by the care and the hand of the king. And there were hung up on every side sky-colored and green and violet hangings, fastened with cords of silk and of purple, which were put into rings of ivory, and were held up with marble pillars. The beds, also [on which the guests half reclined at table], were of gold and silver, placed in order upon a floor paved with porphyry and white marble, which was embellished with painting of wonderful variety. And they that were invited drank in golden cups; and the meats were brought in divers vessels one after another. Wine, also, in abundance, and of the best, was presented, as was worthy of a king's magnificence. . . . Set over every table [was] one of his nobles [who saw to it], that every man might take what he would."

Such was the feast spread out for the men on the immense platform whose ruins subsist to this day, beneath its forest of columns, and blue and purple hangings, as well as in the enchanted groves around, lit up at night with a splendor that rivaled the noonday brilliancy of an Eastern sun. But the women, too, must be enlisted in the grand national undertaking of reducing these rebellious Greeks in their little country beyond the western seas.

So Queen Vasthi "made a feast for the women in the palace, where King Assuerus was used to dwell." One may imagine what the more than regal gorgeousness of this banquet must have been over which Vasthi presided, when one recollects that the great central hall of that palace — the banquet hall of this occasion — was two hundred feet each way, and of proportionate height, decorated with profuse richness, and beautified for the feast as befitted the power of its royal mistress.

"Now, on the seventh day, when the king was merry, and,

after very much drinking, was well warmed with wine, he commanded [the seven chamberlains in attendance on him] to bring in Queen Vasthi before the king, with the crown set upon her head, to show her beauty to all the people and the princes; for she was exceeding beautiful. But she refused."

Drunkenness was the besetting sin of the descendants of the great Cyrus. It crazed Cambyses, and set him upon his wildest and most ruinous expeditions; it made him commit acts of the most atrocious cruelty and vandalism in his own dominions, as well as in Egypt, and cut short a life, which, if regulated by temperance, might have been a blessing to mankind. It helped to set our Assuerus (Xerxes) on every one of those mad projects that ended in defeat and disaster. None but a drunken madman could have been guilty of such follies as the one already mentioned.

Here we have another in the insult offered to his queen, — the order that she should exhibit herself to a crowd of drunken revelers (kings, princes, and plebeians of every class), to gratify the whim of her royal lord. We praise and bless her memory, in that with the self-respect of a true woman, and the lawful pride of a queen, she peremptorily refused. It cost her a crown, and led to the providential exaltation of an humble Hebrew maiden; but, while remembering the piety and courageous self-devotion of Esther, we can not forget the modesty and magnanimity of the beautiful though unfortunate Vasthi.

Around the besotted tyrant were "wise men, who, according to the custom of the kings, were always near his person; and all he did was by their counsel, who knew the laws and judgments of their forefathers." In answer to Assuerus, who was "angry, and inflamed with a very great fury," these wise men, and worthy interpreters of infamous laws, declare that the queen "hath not only injured the king, but also all the peoples and princes. . . . For this deed of the queen will go abroad to all women, so that they will despise their husbands." It is therefore decreed, and public proclamation is to be made thereof, that Queen Vasthi shall forfeit her rank. The whole empire is now ransacked for its most beautiful maidens, who are to be sent to Susa, in order

that from them the royal voluptuary may choose a person worthy to wear Queen Vasthi's crown.

Meanwhile the expedition to Greece had gone forward: its direction had absorbed the attention of Assuerus. In his progress through Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, he might well believe himself a god, and hope that, returning victorious, he might leave at Persepolis and Susa monuments worthy of perpetuating through all time a fame eclipsing that of any other conqueror. The truth that was first forced upon him at Thermopylæ grew into overwhelming conviction at Marathon and Salamis. He returned to Persia worsted, humiliated, a wiser if not a better man.

Four years had elapsed since Vasthi's deposition. No queen had yet been chosen in her place. The crowd of beautiful maidens filled the royal halls allotted to them, — poor victims, doomed to the lifelong bondage, degradation, and misery of Oriental polygamy.

Among them, her race and religion unknown to all save one man, was a Hebrew orphan, Edissa, or Hadasa, called Esther after her appearance at court. Her uncle and adopted father, Mardochai, had been both father and mother to her since infancy. She was the treasure of his life. "She was exceeding fair; and her incredible beauty made her appear agreeable and amiable in the eyes of all." But this was her least recommendation to the favor which she found with all who looked upon her. It was the beautiful soul, full of unearthly purity and wisdom, that looked out through those modest eyes, and irradiated that fair face with a splendor all spiritual and divine, like light from heaven in a transparent vase of exquisite workmanship: it was the sweet unction of the Holy Spirit that gave to her presence its undefinable charm, and shed a heavenly fragrance wherever she moved.

She won, at her first appearance, the respect and preference of the officer superintending the royal household; though "she would not tell him her people or her country; for Mardochai had charged her to say nothing at all of that." The officer, Egeas, who seemed to have a presentiment of her speedy elevation, gave her seven maidens of the king's house to wait upon

her. He was not mistaken. When presented to the disappointed despot and defeated commander, "the king loved her more than all the women; . . . and he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen instead of Vasthi. And he commanded a magnificent feast to be prepared for all the princes and for his servants, for the marriage and wedding of Esther. And he gave rest to all the provinces, and bestowed gifts according to princely magnificence."

How pleasant for the reader of the contemporary annals of Persian despotism to come to this period of much needed repose, granted, after so many wild and wasteful expeditions, to the exhausted populations of the East, through the sweet and soothing influences of a Jewish maiden!

Mardochai the while "abode at the king's gate" (in one of the pavilions of the outer court of the palace), and was contented with filling some obscure and inferior position among the officers of the palace, concealing from all his relationship to the queen, but watching over her welfare with the unwearied industry of true love. "For whatsoever he commanded Esther observed; and she did all things in the same manner as she was wont at that time when he brought her up a little one." During the celebration of her solemn nuptials, her uncle discovered a conspiracy against the king's life, and through her reported it to Assuerus. The service was placed on record, but received, just then, no further acknowledgment. Thus the queen and her guardian continued for four years more to envelop their origin in this prudent obscurity.

Some time after Esther's coronation happened the elevation of Aman, a descendant of the Amalekite king, Agag. Assuerus advanced him "above all the princes that were with him," and commanded that all should do him reverence by prostrations and genuflexions. This homage Mardochai alone refused him, either because it was accompanied with some idolatrous ceremonial, or because he would not abase himself before one whom he knew to be the mortal enemy of his race and creed. It would appear that Mardochai, when reproached with his disregard of the royal command, assigned as his excuse, that, being a Jew, he could not

bend the knee to Aman. This, becoming known to the favorite, filled him with such resentment, that he forthwith resolved to be revenged on the whole Hebrew population of the empire. In the first month of the twelfth year of Assuerus, Aman set about executing his project. As was the custom of the Persian idolaters, at the beginning of the new year, he cast lots (*purim*) to find out from his gods when it would be most auspicious to begin the extermination of the Jews. The lot fell upon the twelfth or last month of that year. A preliminary decree was obtained from the king by the promise of paying ten thousand talents (an enormous sum) into the royal treasury, and by representing the Jews as "a people scattered through all the provinces, . . . and separated one from another, that use new laws and ceremonies, and, moreover, despise the king's ordinances."

It is the old, old story. No enemy of true religion, from the days of Aman down to this advanced period in the nineteenth century after Christ, ever bethought him of stirring up sovereigns or legislatures to measures of persecution, without assigning as the determining motive the fact that the obnoxious creed and its professors were "a people apart" amid the mass of the surrounding populations; that their religious practices constitute "new laws and ceremonies," the use of which are a practical contempt of the state ordinances. When the self-love of the despot — be that a single person, or the many-headed body of the legislature, or the mob — has been stirred up to the necessary degree of vindictiveness, then some such consideration as the "ten thousand talents" proves a resistless argument, before which justice, innocence, and even the memory of recent and glorious services, are of no avail.

It was worthy of the prodigal and reckless Xerxes with whom our early reading has made us familiar, to answer Aman, "As to the money which thou promisest, keep it for thyself; and, as to the people, do with them as seemeth good to thee."

The ordinance of extermination is carefully drawn up, and sent to all the provinces, so that the officers of every rank whom it concerned should see it carried out on the same day, — the 13th of the last month. It was then publicly posted up in

Susa; and while the Jews were filled with consternation, and all their households plunged in grief, Aman and the king held a high festival in honor of the event.

Mardochai, whose unbending temper had first enkindled the persecutor's fury, was now the loudest in his demonstrations of grief. He vented it by cries in the public streets, and appeared in sackcloth at the palace-gate. But his brother-officers refused him admittance in this garb. This incident led to Esther's being made acquainted with the existence of the royal decree. She vainly remonstrated with her relative for his breach of court etiquette, and sent him befitting apparel by her chamberlain. He gave this officer a copy of the edict, to be laid before the queen, and admonished her through him to lose no time in seeing Assuerus, and using her influence to avert the impending calamity. It was, however, forbidden, under pain of death, for any person, even the queen, to approach the royal presence uncalled for; and Esther had not seen the king for thirty days. She informed Mardochai of this difficulty; but, with characteristic spirit, he sent word to Esther, bidding her remember that even her life was not safe by the side of her royal husband; that, by her not using her intercession, she throws away the opportunity of becoming the savior of her people; that, if she refuses to do so, God will find some other means of dispelling the danger, while she and her house will be cast off for ever. "And who knoweth [he concludes] whether thou art not, therefore, come to the kingdom that thou mightest be ready in such a time as this?"

It needed not such arguments to impel that pure and lofty soul to risk even life itself in so holy a cause. She enjoins Mardochai, and all the Jews in Susa, to begin immediately a three-days' fast, in which she and her handmaids will unite. This over, she stood in her royal robes within the presence-chamber, was graciously welcomed by the king, and begged, as the only favor she cared then to solicit, that he and Aman should sup with her that evening. The enjoyment of this first banquet is followed by another on the morrow, at which the queen promises to petition her husband for a special favor. From the first ban-

quet, Aman departs much elated. The sight of the unyielding Mardochai at the gate, as the favorite passes homeward, so inflames him with rage, that he holds a family council forthwith, and is advised by his wife, Zares, to have a gallows, fifty cubits high, erected that same night, and to obtain the king's permission in the morning to hang Mardochai upon it. As the king had drunk much wine at Esther's table in the evening, he spent a wakeful night, and asked that some part of the annals of his reign should be read by the attendants. These chanced to fall on the conspiracy against the king's life discovered by Mardochai; and the latter, having asked how Mardochai had been requited for this signal service, was informed that no reward had been bestowed upon him.

Assuerus, indignant, resolved to repair the omission on the instant. But, lo! at that very instant, at the early dawn, Aman presents himself to solicit the order for Mardochai's execution.

Why delay the reader? The unsuspecting and ambitious favorite is asked by royalty, "What ought to be done to the man whom the king is desirous to honor?" Of course, Aman thinks that this honor is destined for himself; and he unblushingly answers, that "the man whom the king desireth to honor" should be arrayed in royal robes, with the crown on his head, and mounted on the king's favorite charger; and that the highest dignitary in the realm should hold the bridle-rein, and, proceeding through the streets of the capital, proclaim to all, "Thus shall he be honored whom the king hath a mind to honor."

Aman, being "one of the king's most noble princes," is ordered instantly to carry out to the letter, in favor of Mardochai, the programme just laid before the king, and to proclaim the honor of the man whose ruin he had come to seek. Did Esther hear of these proceedings in her private apartments, where she and her attendants were still, as is not improbable, supplicating the divine goodness in favor of the doomed Hebrews? But Aman! Oh, how the plots of the wicked are turned against themselves by that overruling Providence that never fails to show its hand when iniquity is about to pluck the fruit it has been so long maturing!

"And Mardochai returned to the palace-gate," to resume his sackcloth, and continue his fast and his prayers; while "Aman made haste to go to his house, mourning, and having his head covered. And he told Zares his wife, and his friends, all that had befallen him. And the wise men whom he had in council, and his wife, answered him, If Mardochai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou canst not resist him; but thou shalt fall in his sight." With these prophetic words ringing in his ears, like the first sound of the trump of doom, he is hurried off to the royal banquet; for he is still the first subject in the Persian empire.

It is a right royal banquet in Esther's most gorgeous hall, amid all the incomprehensible splendors of Eastern luxury, and the witchery which the lovely queen and her Hebrew maidens could lend to the entertainment by song and dance, and harp and timbrel.

The critical moment has come for Esther, whose heart has been soaring above the sights and sounds of the banquet-hall to the throne of mercy on high. The king is "warm with wine," and requests her to state her petition. "Then she answered, If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please thee, give me my life for which I ask, and my people for which I request; for we are given up, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. . . . I would have mourned in silence; but . . . we have an enemy whose cruelty redoundeth upon the king. And King Assuerus answered, and said, Who is this? . . . And Esther said, It is this Aman that is our adversary and most wicked enemy."

The angry monarch — angry at his own too easy temper, and at the facility with which it has been played upon, — rushes into the garden outside to cool his fevered head in the breezes that sweep down the lovely valley of the Choaspes. Aman is groveling prostrate at the queen's feet, begging piteously for his life. She was reclining, according to the ancient custom, on a rich bed beside the table; and on it, at her feet, lay Aman, when Assuerus suddenly re-entered. This outrageous breach of Oriental manners, the presumption to approach the person of the

queen, rekindles the king's fury; and, at his first expression of anger, the attendant officers rush upon Aman, and cover his face as that of one doomed to instant death. At that moment, too, Assuerus is told of the gibbet prepared for Mardochai in Aman's house. "Hang him upon it!" is the swift command.

Ought we to pity the wife, before whose eyes the sentence is executed on the husband, so powerful, so haughty, so athirst for the blood of his enemies but a few hours ago? Had Zares, after the utterance of her last words to Aman, as the royal escort were bidding him to the fatal banquet, no sinking of the heart, no ominous foreboding of the coming-back to her own house of the Furies that she had let loose upon so many innocent Hebrew homes? And was it not she that advised the erection of that same gibbet on which Aman is now swaying in his death-struggle? Let the justice of the King of kings pass by; and let us bow down our heads as its shadow falls upon us.

There is no concealment now of Mardochai's relations to the queen. To her all Aman's possessions are made over, and they are given in charge to Mardochai. On the spot, orders are despatched, revoking the decrees against the Jews.

"And Mardochai going forth out of the palace, and from the king's presence, shone in royal apparel, to wit, of violet and sky-color, wearing a golden crown on his head, and clothed with a cloak of silk and purple. And all the city rejoiced, and was glad. But to the Jews a new light seemed to rise, — joy, honor, and dancing."

That with Aman should perish all those in high authority who had advised or abetted him in his cruel project of extermination, was but justice. But between Amalec and Israel there could be neither truce, nor peace, nor forgiveness, nor mercy, nor pity. It was a cruel age, whose children, of every nationality, had inherited, with treasured memories of many wrongs, the belief that blood alone could cancel them, — the blood not only of the Amalekite armed for the murder of his Hebrew neighbor and kinsman, but the blood of helpless women and children.

We wish it were not recorded, in the same book that describes Esther's loveliness and virtues, that "the Jews made a great

slaughter of their enemies, and killed them, repaying according to what they had prepared to do to them." Besides this bloodshed, which took place in the beginning of the year, a more fearful massacre was permitted in the last month, that of Adar; seventy-five thousand persons, of every sex and age, becoming the victims of this indiscriminate butchery. Then only did the Jews rest from their bloody work. "And they appointed that day to be a holy-day of feasting and gladness."

Most especially could we desire to relieve the memory of Esther from all responsibility for these massacres. But it may be that her gentle womanly instincts were swayed in this by the stern and unpitying nature of her relative.

Perhaps the day is not far distant when scientific men, by the munificent aid of their governments, may explore the gigantic ruin-mounds of Susa, on the banks of the Choaspes (*Shupar*), and bring to light the records of the remaining years of Assuerus-Xerxes, and thereby give to the world the sequel of Esther's life.

XIX.

The Mother of the Machabee Martyrs.

NO grander figure than that of this martyred mother could close the long line of Hebrew heroines, extending from the days of Noe to the birth of Christ. Her husband, Archippus, in spite of his assumed Greek name, belonged to the highest of the priestly families, to that, consequently, of Mathathias, the father of Judas Machabee, the deliverer of Israel at its darkest period. The illustrious lady herself is called Machabæa by Josephus; by others she is named Salome; by others again, Anna; and finally, Shamunah (princess) by others. It is of little importance: she has been immortalized in the minds and hearts of men as the Mother of the Seven Machabee Martyrs, and needs no other name or title. Her eldest son, as we shall see farther on, was also called Machabee; and thus we are authorized to believe that she and her boys, by their glorious witnessing at Antioch, gave the first luster to the name which their kinsmen, Judas Machabee and his brothers, were immediately afterward to make so famous in the East, and for ever dear to the lovers of true religion and true liberty.

The lot of this noble family was cast on evil days, the worst in every way through which the Hebrew race had ever passed. It will not be possible to appreciate the moral victory gained at Antioch by the widow and her seven boys, or the heroic martial struggles of their kinsman Judas and his companions-in-arms, unless we take a brief survey of the social and religious condition of their country at the very time the former were called

on to suffer for their faith, and the latter to fight for it in the field.

It is with the first years of Antiochus IV., generally known as Epiphanes (" the Illustrious "), but better designated as Epimanes (" Madman "), that we are concerned in this narrative. His early youth had been spent in Rome, where he was detained as a hostage after the death of his father, Antiochus III., or the Great. He usurped the throne of Syria over the head of his nephew, his chief recommendation being an intense hatred of the Romans, and an avowed determination to make the Grecian power, language, and religion prevail throughout the limits of the empire founded by Alexander the Great. Palestine had been bestowed as a dower, with the hand of his sister, on Ptolemy Epiphanes, king of Egypt; and one of the first designs formed by Antiochus was for the recovery of this province, the fairest gem in his crown. He was encouraged and aided in this by the unworthy conduct of a numerous faction among the Jews. In Jerusalem, a powerful party aimed at repudiating altogether the national language, customs, and religion in order to become identified with their Greek masters, and thereby to make of Judæa a living and influential member of the Eastern empire. This was known as the Hellenizing party; and its head, at the accession of Antiochus, was Josue, or Jason, the brother of Onias III., the high priest. This man did not blush to go to Antioch, and purchase from the king, by a bribe of three hundred and sixty talents, the office held by his own brother, and which united the chief magistracy with the pontificate. A more powerful argument, however, than this large sum, was the promise made by Jason, that he and his numerous friends in Judæa would thenceforward use all their industry and influence in making the body of their nation conform in religion, as in all else, to the Greeks. He even went so far as to promise the king a hundred and fifty talents more, if he might have license to set up a gymnasium, or public school, — partly destined for teaching literature and the sciences, but chiefly for every sort of manly exercise, — together with an ephebium, or training school, for boys and girls, where they were initiated into the mysteries of Ashtarte, and all the abominations of the Syrian

idolatry. This had been in former times a favorite means of perversion employed by the heathen queens and their husbands; and Antiochus and his ministers knew its value well.

Nor was Jason unsuccessful in his nefarious efforts. "Forthwith he began to bring over his countrymen to the fashion of the Heathens." He opened his gymnasium beneath the very shadow of the temple, and dishonored all the best families in Jerusalem by devoting the fairest flower of their youth to the worst purposes sanctioned by Eastern idolatry. But soon afterward, a Benjamite and ally of Jason's, who, like himself, had thrown away his Hebrew name, and was called Menelaus, supplanted the apostate by the same means that the latter had used in displacing his own brother, Onias.

The deposed high priest, Jason, suddenly returned upon Jerusalem with a chosen band of Ammonites, stormed the city, sacked it, and "slew his countrymen without mercy." He was repulsed in the end, however, and wandered through Egypt and Greece, finding nowhere rest or refuge. "And he that had cast out many unburied was himself cast forth both unlamented and unburied."

The murderous onslaught of this reprobate was the first of a long series of dreadful evils. Antiochus, but too glad to find, in the rising of Jason, a pretext for treating the entire nation as rebels, marched on Jerusalem with a large army, was admitted by the treachery of his partisans within the walls, and for three entire days gave up the city to the sword. Forty thousand persons fell in the indiscriminate slaughter that ensued, and an equal number were sold away into foreign servitude. By the advice of the infamous Menelaus, the conqueror spoiled the temple, and returned to Antioch with a booty amounting to eighteen hundred talents in gold, having left a Phrygian governor in Jerusalem to second the proselytizing zeal of Menelaus.

Judæa, however, dared to give signs of grief; and this afforded the king a welcome opportunity for crushing out the last remnants of national life among the down-trodden Hebrews, as well as for possessing himself of their remaining treasures. An army of twenty-two thousand men, headed by Apollonius, a collector of the royal revenues, appears unexpectedly before the walls of

the doomed city, puts to the sword the entire male adult population, sets fire to the different quarters of the city, levels with the ground both the blackened walls and the fortifications, and carries off an immense plunder and ten thousand captives, women and children, destined to hopeless slavery.

The year 163 before the birth of Christ is made memorable by the fact that Antiochus Epiphanes crowned his work of subjugating the Jews, and extinguishing their religion, by dedicating the temple to Olympian Jove. This was only one of a series of administrative measures undertaken to secure perfect uniformity of worship among all his subjects, of whatever creed and race. The severest orders were published in Jerusalem, forbidding any celebration or commemoration of the sabbath, compelling the Jews themselves to become the most active agents in profaning the holy place, and every remaining object connected with the worship of Jehovah, by sacrificing swine on his altar, and sprinkling with their blood the walls, pavement, vessels, and their own persons. Tripods with lighted charcoal were placed in the streets before every door, and the inmates were forced to cast incense on the flame in honor of the gods of Greece; while the shameless priests and priestesses of these deities paraded through the city with song and dance, bearing the abominable symbols of their most unhallowed rites, which they celebrated, not only in the courts of the temple, but within the Holy of holies itself. Parents were forbidden to dedicate their children to the God of Abraham by the initiatory rite of circumcision; and two mothers convicted of having done so secretly were publicly led through every street, with their babes bound to their necks, and hurled from the steepest part of the city walls. Indeed, every mother against whom a similar offense was proved was strangled, and hung up before her own door with her babe lashed to her arms.

Antiochus, to make sure work of it, came himself to Jerusalem, took up his residence in the most elevated part of the city, and commanded that all persons who had till then refused to conform to his edicts should be brought before him, and made to eat swine's flesh. Among the recusants was one man, a priest named

Eleazar, who nobly refused all compliance or compromise, and was beaten to death in presence of the brutal court and its more brutal king.

Such an illustrious instance of fidelity to God baffled the savage tyrant, and sent him back, filled with rage and resentment, to Antioch. In that city were, beside the multitude recently sold into slavery, many Jewish families; some of them of the highest rank, like the family of the martyred Onias, forced to reside there, because their own country was not a safe abode for them; and others detained there as hostages, or to prevent them from exercising at home an influence adverse to the royal policy. Among these was the widowed Salome, or Machabæa, and her seven sons.

Antiochus determined to make this noble family apostatize publicly in view of all Antioch; so that their obedience to his will, or their terrible punishment, should serve as an example to all that were left of the Hebrew population. The law prohibiting the eating of swine's flesh, or of any other food noted as impure by Moses, was a mere local, ceremonial, and temporary ordinance, most wise and proper in every way among the Hebrew race. But its violation was made by Antiochus a test of formal and solemn apostasy. The mother and her boys are brought before the royal tribunal, the king himself presiding with every circumstance calculated to impress the arraigned with awe and terror. The statues of the tutelary deities of the empire and city were placed on each side, with tripods smoking with the most fragrant incense and spices. There, too, were all the appliances of torture known to Asiatic ingenuity and despotism, — the rack, the red-hot bed of iron, and the brazen caldrons with their fires lighted; the cruel whips and scourges, whose every blow could pierce to the bone; and, worse than all, the eyes of a cruel crowd of soldiers steeled against every emotion of pity; of courtiers to whose palled senses another's tortures would have a delightful sensation of novelty; and of apostates whose alternate prayers and jeers would sicken the soul, and shake the purpose, of the strongest.

The eldest, who is called Machabee in an old Latin version of Josephus, had apparently refused, in his own and his brethren's

name, to taste the forbidden flesh; and all were, in consequence, cruelly scourged and torn. This was the first agony endured by the tender mother's heart. As their constancy was in no wise shaken by the flagellation, Antiochus questioned Machabee again. "What wouldst thou ask or learn of us?" is the youth's stern reply. "We are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of God received from our fathers." There is a lofty contempt in the noble boy's words, that filled the king with anger. He bids his executioners light their fires. But, while caldron and iron grating are made red hot, the fiendish persecutor bids his imps to tear out from its roots the tongue that has thus spoken, to scalp the proud head, and to cut off the extremities of his hands and feet, while Salome and her other six boys are forced to look on. "And, when he was now maimed in all parts, he [Antiochus] commanded him, being yet alive, to be brought to the fire, and to be fried in the frying-pan; and, while he was suffering therein long torments, the rest, together with the mother, exhorted one another to die manfully, saying, The Lord God will look upon the truth, and will take pleasure in us."

No need to mention the mother's words: she spoke by the lips of him whom, boy as he was, no torture could subdue or shake; and her faith it was which reminded them of the heavens opened over their heads, with God and his angels contemplating a fortitude such as divine grace alone could sustain, and of the company of patriarchs already made aware of the struggle going on, and preparing to welcome each young victor as his soul was released to join their happy society.

The second, Aber, is now led forth; and it is the purpose of Antiochus, that this one shall be made "a mocking-stock." They "pulled off the skin of his head with the hair," as a preliminary, and with taunt and jeer "asked him if he would eat [swine's flesh], before he were punished throughout the whole body in every limb." They will not be in a hurry with this boy, as with the eldest. He is younger, and less capable of endurance. "But he answered in his own language. . . . I will not do it. Wherefore he also . . . received the torments of the first. And, when he was at his last gasp, he said thus:

Thou indeed, O most wicked man, destroyest us out of the present life; but the King of the world will raise us up, who die for his laws, in the resurrection of eternal life."

The answer of the third, Machir, as well as his prompt courage, was no less remarkable. "When he was required, he quickly put forth his tongue, and courageously stretched out his hands, and said with confidence, These I have from heaven; but for the laws of God I now despise them, because I hope to receive them again from him. So that the king, and they that were with him, wondered at the young man's courage, because he esteemed the torments as nothing."

One might think that a sagacious and politic ruler, having found a noble mother who had trained her seven boys to such purity of conscience that no stain could rest upon it, and to such a high sense of duty that no hope or fear could shake their honor, would deem it an advantage to himself and his subjects to reverence and reward the parent, and to cherish her offspring as the seed of a great and good race. One would be led to expect from a polished and brave race like the Greeks, even the Greeks of Asia, that the incredible fortitude of that mother should be tried no further, and that, as a reward for the constancy and magnanimity of the three oldest, the four remaining should, by common acclaim of the multitude present, be shielded from every harm by that humanity that leads us to sympathize even with the young of the wild beast, when they bravely face danger and death. It was far otherwise, however. The fierce wrath of king, executioners, and bystanders, was only inflamed the more by the intrepidity of the little sufferers, each of whom bore himself, beneath the scourge and the knife, and on the crackling fires, as if the spirits of his dead brothers had passed into his frame, and filled it with their united heroism. And how that woman, stronger than her sex, that mother, superior to all a mother's hopes and affections, triumphed in each of her darlings! How their eye sought hers as their limbs quivered on the rack, or their generous blood gushed forth at each fresh wound, and feature after feature of boyish beauty and grace disappeared before the knife and the flame! And how, from out the depths of her

soul, her eyes poured into theirs the unutterable eloquence of love and faith and exhortation!

And so, in that fair city, the pride of all the East, beneath the shadow of those stupendous crags, in our day crowned with fragments of ruined battlements, but then covered with temples, palaces, and shady groves, the appalling drama proceeded, — act after act of ruthless cruelty on the one hand, and, on the other, of mingled agony in that mother, and unyielding constancy in her child-martyrs. The fourth, Judas (named like his heroic kinsman, who was so soon to be God's avenger of these cruelties, and liberator of his people), in his turn, flashes forth these dying words upon the crowd and the king: "Better, when suffering death at the hands of men, to fix one's hope in God, who will raise up again the body sacrificed for him, than to resemble thee, O king, for whom no blissful resurrection is in store." More terrible still were the words of the fifth, Achaz: "Thou hast power," he says to Antiochus; "thou dost what thou wilt: but think not that our nation is forsaken by God. But stay patiently a while, and thou shalt see his great power, in what manner he will torment thee and thy seed." If a prophetic light had fallen on the dark soul of Antiochus as he heard these utterances, he would have seen himself in the rich temple of far Elymais, stricken with a loathsome disease in every limb, while in the pursuit of plunder and the gratification of his unbridled passions: he would have recognized himself in the frantic madman, tortured in body and soul, hurried from city to city in search of relief, imploring in vain the idols of Babylon and Susa and Persepolis to dispel the visions that haunt his spirit, and the pains that rack his limbs, and dying in a frenzy of remorse and despair, — the fated end of every persecutor.

It was the sentence reiterated by the sixth of the boyish band, Areth: We [the Hebrew nation] suffer these things, having sinned against our God; and things that fill all men with wonder befall us in consequence. "But do not think that thou shalt escape unpunished, for that thou hast attempted to fight against God." And so the little martyr's spirit winged its way to the throne of the sole Creator and Judge of all.

To the proud and fond mother, who that very morning had seen her seven beautiful boys surround her with a wealth of love and reverence beyond all price, and almost beyond thought, was now left but her youngest, her latest born, almost a babe in years; for it is the constant tradition that even the oldest had scarcely emerged from boyhood. And there she stood, before that court and crowd, that assembled city, with the six mangled corpses of those who had triumphed before her, and the little Jacob by her side, pressed for a few moments more to the aching heart over which so many waves of bitterness have swept within the brief space of a few hours.

"She bravely exhorted every one of them in her own language, being filled with wisdom, and joining a man's heart to a woman's thought." She knows, however, that the fate of her sons is to be her own; but she is only anxious to see that not one of her seven pearls be torn from her crown. And, springing from her side with a last embrace and a last look of mutual exhortation, her Jacob is in the reeking hands of the executioners. The fury of that wild beast, the populace of an Eastern city, has been roused to frenzy by the repeated sight and taste of blood: it is as eager as its master to torment yonder innocent child. So he, too, is scourged, and the golden hair, with its scalp, torn from his head. The mother's voice is heard above the hoarse murmurs of the crowd, encouraging her little eaglet to follow his mates in their flight. "Now Antiochus, thinking himself despised, . . . when the youngest was yet alive, did not only exhort him by words, but also assured him with an oath, that he would make him a rich and a happy man, and, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers, would take him for a friend."

The child is not moved by the promises and the oath of the false king. The mother was then called, and "she promised that she would counsel her son. So, bending herself toward him, mocking the cruel tyrant, she said in her own language, My son, have pity upon me that bore thee, . . . and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age. I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also. So thou shalt not fear

this tormentor, but, being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren."

Within the whole range of sacred history there is only one other mother mentioned who "stood" by her son's side to encourage him to consummate his sacrifice. Was it in memory of the mother of the Machabees, that she, too, was called by Christian ages the "Mother of Sorrows," and that Christian art has loved to paint her at the foot of the cross, supporting the lifeless body of the crucified, while the sword of a sevenfold grief pierces her bosom?

It was the Holy Spirit that placed on Salome's lips these inspired words: it was also he that filled the soul of her boy. Ere she had done speaking, he broke out, "For whom do you stay? I will not obey the commandment of the king. . . . Then the king, being incensed with anger, raged against him more cruelly than all the rest, taking it grievously that he was mocked." The executioners, though wearied by their repeated exertions, bethought them only of overcoming the obstinacy of this, the youngest and last of the seven. They applied their whole ingenuity to torture that delicate frame in every member and every sense. But the mother was there, putting forth the whole energy of her faith, and the resistless eloquence of her tenderness, in sustaining this her best-beloved at every stage of his fearful agony. "Courage, my brave soldier-boy," we may hear her say in the words of St. Gregory Nazianzen, — "courage! Your tormentors' strength is failing: that is my only fear. There must be no delay for you or me. A few moments more, O dearest one, and I shall be of all women the most blessed, and you of children the happiest, and most to be praised." So, victorious over every effort of the barbarians to break down his childish spirit, the glorious widow's youngest triumphed over all the might of Antiochus, and passed unstained, and thrice chastened in blood and flame, to his everlasting reward.

And this mother? Let us pause one moment. There is a most beautiful passage in the Fourth Book of Kings (chap. vi.), where it is told how Elisæus and his servant were surrounded

unawares by a large Syrian army, without any apparent means of escape. The servant was much frightened; but, at the prayer of the prophet, his eyes were opened, "and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisæus." One would be tempted to think, on seeing that widowed mother standing amid the bloodthirsty crowd, and witnessing the dying struggles of her last child, that God has left them, and the church of which they are the martyrs, absolutely defenseless and forsaken. Not so, not so! The eye that could have pierced the veil spread over Antioch the Magnificent, and her dazzling circle of hills, must have beheld them covered with the embattled legions of God's angels, come down to triumph in the invincible fortitude of mother and sons, to escort their spirits to the abode of the glorious company of patriarchs, martyrs, and saints, and to guard their precious remains against the insult of the heathen.

"And last of all, after the sons, the mother was consumed." Surely when that great soul joined the shining multitude where Sara and Abraham and Miriam and Moses were honored as the parents of God's chosen family in eternity, both princess and prophetess welcomed her as even greater than they. And when, among those lights of the ancient Testament, that mother and her seven boys shone like the brightest constellation in the blessed multitude, Miriam could intone her own exultant hymn, while the whole army of heaven took up the strain, "Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously magnified. . . . The Lord is my strength and my praise; and he is become salvation to me. He is my God, and I will glorify him; the God of my father, and I will exalt him."

Nor is it in the Hebrew nation alone that the memory of this heroic parent and her boys has been ever cherished. The Christian Church from its birth has paid them the highest honors. At Antioch, where the followers of Christ were first called "Christians," in derision of their Founder, and where existed the largest and most flourishing of the early Christian societies in Asia, the burial-place of "the mother of the Machabees and her seven sons" was regarded with special veneration. A splendid church

soon arose over their tomb, and was visited by St. Jerome. They were the first among the saints of the old law to receive the honors of canonization. Their feast was celebrated on the first day of August. Their panegyric was pronounced, among others innumerable, by St. Cyprian, himself a glorious martyr, by St. Gregory Nazianzen, by St. John Chrysostom, who was a native of Antioch, by St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine, and the most eloquent and saintly men of subsequent ages.

When, at the close of the eleventh century, all Europe was roused to rescue Jerusalem from the Saracens, the Crusaders on their way thither performed prodigies of valor to possess themselves of Antioch. One of their first cares was to restore the Church of the Machabees; and the purest and bravest among them, like Godefrey de Bouillon, caught, while praying on the hallowed spot, a part of the heroic spirit of constancy and self-sacrifice with which the place was instinct. But it was in Palestine itself, and among the countrymen and countrywomen of Salome and her sons, that their examples produced immediate and salutary effects. The band of devoted men assembled around Mathathias Machabee and his sons were fired by the recital of the sufferings of their kinswoman and her children. The sacred fire ran like flame among the dry grass of the wilderness, spreading in circles growing ever wider, till all the mountain region of Judæa was ablaze with the spirit caught from the ashes of the Antiochian martyrs. It thence enveloped all the valley of the Jordan, with the land where Debbora and Judith triumphed, and ceased not to glow in every true Israelite bosom, and to nerve every manly arm, till God's people were once more free, till the heathen oppressor was driven from the soil, the temple cleansed from the pollutions of Grecian worship, and the God of Israel worshiped with rapturous thanksgiving by the remnants of the Hebrew people, purified by terrible sufferings, but made free by a regenerated priesthood leading an army of believing men.

XX.

Elisabeth, Mother of John the Baptist.

THE mighty spirit evoked by the struggle in which shone forth so brightly the heroism of the Machabee martyrs and warrior priests did not outlive the next generation. The independence conquered by the sons of Mathathias was finally acknowledged under Simon Machabee by the neighboring sovereigns. His sons should have been contented to rule as high priests and princes a republic such as existed under the Judges. But Simon's grandson, Aristobulus I., fell into the hands of the Hellenizing party, became ashamed of his Hebrew name, and exchanged it for a Greek one; assumed the title of king, and with it usurped a more than regal power, and practiced the worst vices of despotism. From this flowed, as a natural consequence, revolutions and civil wars, in which upwards of one hundred thousand people perished.

When Elisabeth, the sainted mother of the Precursor, was in her girlhood, an Idumæan family, the Herods, were rising to supreme power in Judæa. Just forty years before the birth of Christ, Herod the Great was appointed King of Judæa by the Roman senate, to the exclusion of the Machabean or Asmonean dynasty. Three years afterward, he was in possession of Jerusalem, his authority was universally acknowledged; and his being the husband of Mariamne, a great-granddaughter of Queen Salome, the wife of Aristobulus I., obtained him the support of a large popular faction.

Thus at the coming of the Repairer, foreshown to Eve in para-

dise, of the Blessed Seed promised to Abraham and Sara, the scepter of Judæa was held by a descendant of Esau, to the exclusion, not only of the priestly line of the Machabees, but also of the house of David and the line of Juda, — indeed, of all the descendants of Jacob. While Herod was restoring with acknowledged magnificence the temple of Jerusalem, he was also rebuilding, or repairing with equal splendor, the rival and idolatrous temple of Samaria; he was erecting another magnificent shrine to Augustus Cæsar at Panias, at the nearest source of the Jordan, and creating on the seaboard of the Mediterranean, in honor of the same Augustus, the imperial city of Cæsarea with a temple of still more superb dimensions, besides providing lavishly for the maintenance of several other heathen establishments. Though professing the national religion, the Idumæan was ambitious to win the good opinion of both Greeks and Romans by promoting the worship and interests of idolatry.

Amid these years of blood and national degeneracy, of indifference and apostasy, the parents of the future Baptist had passed from youth to old age. It was time for the Prince of Peace to appear.

"There was, in the days of Herod the King of Judæa, a certain priest named Zachary, of the course of Abia, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name Elisabeth. And they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame." Both were thus descended in a direct line from Aaron, whose wife was also called Elisabeth, and was a sister of Naasson, prince of the tribe of Juda. Thus they united the blood of both the priestly and the kingly lines. Among all the moral decadence and political changes around them, the two holy personages presented to us in the very first page of gospel history are said to be "both just before God, walking in all the commandments . . . of the Lord without blame." Though "both were well advanced in years," "they had no son." With their holiest hopes and affections set upon the fulfillment of the promises, and the speedy appearance of the Messiah, they were deprived, at the close of a long life of unvarying fidelity, of the dearest reward of the just and holy

in Israel, a son who might live to look upon the Messiah, and bask in the light of the fulfilled promises.

This was, however, to be the unspeakable happiness stored up for Elisabeth and Zachary. "And it came to pass, when he executed the priestly function in the order of his course before God, . . . it was his lot to offer incense, going into the temple of the Lord; and all the multitude of the people was praying without at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zachary seeing him was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said, Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John; and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord, and shall drink no wine nor strong drink."

Is not this the message delivered of old to the mother of Samson, and then, again, to the still more privileged mother of Samuel? John, the son to be miraculously given to Elisabeth in her old age, is to be a Nazarite, like the great Danite hero, and the mighty prophet-judge. He, too, is to be set apart unto God, to bear from his birth the burthen of the lifelong vow, "to drink no wine nor strong drink." But there is more than this. Before his birth "he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. . . . He shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people (Mal. iv. 6)."

Nazarite and prophet, greater than Samson, or Samuel, or even Elias, is to be this chosen one, — filled, too, with the Holy Ghost, the creating and sanctifying Spirit, and going before the face of God as the immediate messenger and depositary of the divine power, to change the hearts of men, to compel the faith of unbelievers, and prepare the ways of God among his people, till he follow to create upon earth "a perfect people." The venerable priest, dazzled by the brightness of the angelic apparition, and divided between overwhelming joy and fear at the prospect

opened up to him of having his own and his companion's hopes thus realized, dares not believe his senses, or allow his mind to acquiesce in the literal import of the heavenly message. "Whereby shall I know this?" he hesitatingly inquires. It is a sin thus to question the divine veracity or power; and he is punished on the spot. "And the angel said to him, I am Gabriel, who stand before God, and am sent to speak to thee, and to bring thee these good tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass; because thou hast not believed my words which shall be fulfilled in their time. And the people were waiting for Zachary; and they wondered that he tarried so long in the temple. And, when he came out, he could not speak to them, and they understood that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he made signs to them, and remained dumb."

The divine messenger here sent to announce the birth of the Precursor is the same that announced to Daniel the time fixed for the appearance of the Messiah, and who, some six months later, will be sent to Nazareth to declare to the chosen virgin of Israel that the time of the incarnation has arrived.

We may anticipate so far as to bring together the mother of the Word Incarnate and her blessed relative the mother of his Forerunner. The latter, following the divine instinct for retirement and obscurity that was to characterize her son, had left the busy multitude of the city, and buried herself amid the mountain solitudes of Carmel, at Juttah possibly, and near the former home of Abigail. There, in prayer, and devout meditation of God's wonderful ways, she was looking forward to the coming of the Holy One of Israel, when it was told her that her cousin from Nazareth was approaching. No sooner does the sound of Mary's voice, as she greets the household on entering, fall upon her ear, than Elisabeth is filled with a supernatural light. Had the ark of the covenant (lost, alas! in the first destruction of Jerusalem) been carried, as of yore, through the mountain regions of Judæa, with the accustomed pageantry of solemn procession and dance and song, how gladly would this holy wife of a holy priest have gone forth to meet it, joined the mothers and maidens

of her neighborhood in the joyous hymn, and besought the God who made the ark his mercy-seat to bless herself and the treasure confided to her! And had the priests who bore it tarried for the night with Zachary, and chosen his roof as the resting-place of their sacred charge, had not he and his wife esteemed themselves more blessed than Obed-edom of old? But it was she of whom the ark of the covenant was a figure, the living ark that bore the word made flesh, the Holy One of Israel, who had come to bless that home, to bless Elisabeth and her babe. It was the sanctification promised by the angel, the gift of the Holy Ghost before his birth, as the rare privilege of him whom Christ was afterward to call "the friend of the bridegroom." And lo! the bridegroom is come to visit his friend, and the friend leaps with joy at his presence. The Holy Spirit is poured out like a flood of supernatural light and exultation on the mother; and her household is filled with the sound of inspired voices. "And Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she cried out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women. . . . And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? . . . Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."

Elisabeth and her privileged babe were thus the first two human beings to whom the mystery of the incarnation was revealed; and of all mortals this daughter of Aaron was the first to confess the divinity of Christ, the twofold truth of his perfect Godhead and perfect human nature united in that living Lord whose mother was there before her. No wonder that Christian piety and Christian art in every succeeding generation have loved to blend together in their representations these two mothers and their babes. "And Mary abode with her about three months, and she returned to her own house."

Zachary's punishment was now near its end. His son was born; and all his kinsfolk and neighbors assembled on the eighth day, when the child was to receive the sacramental rite that he was himself to replace by a baptism preparatory to that of Christ. He is, therefore, the golden link binding together the old law and the new, the prophets to the apostles, the minis-

trations and sacraments of Moses to those of Christ: hence he receives a name imposed by divine command. John, "the grace or gift of Jehovah," is prophetic of the nearness of Him who is "the fullness of grace." The kinsfolk present would have the child "called Zachary, by his father's name. And his mother, answering, said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said to her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And, demanding a writing-table he wrote, saying, John is his name. And they all wondered."

From the hour that he was struck dumb in the temple, he was also deaf; so that he could only explain himself, or understand others, by signs or by writing. Evidently the wonder felt by the bystanders arose from the fact that they believed the name to have been revealed separately to both parents. But with the imposition of the name, and the conclusion of the ceremony, Zachary's expiation was ended. "Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue [loosed]; and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came upon all their neighbors: and all these things were noised abroad over all the hill-country of Judæa. And all they that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying, What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him."

Was it during the festivity, and before the guests dispersed, or on a special occasion occurring soon afterward, that Zachary poured forth the inspired song which forms the triumphant conclusion in the Matins Office throughout the Christian Church? "And Zachary . . . was filled with the Holy Ghost; and he prophesied, saying, —

> "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
> Because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people."

"The Orient from on high" hath not yet shed his first beams over the hills and pasture-grounds of Bethlehem, nor have the voices "from on high" startled the shepherds on their midnight watches. But what has transpired at Juttah makes every faithful heart in the hill-country, ay, and in Jerusalem itself, beat

with quicker pulsations. Then neighbor recounts to neighbor, in the field, on the road, or by the fire on the hearthstone, how the infant John's birth was heralded and attended by miracles; how Zachary's tongue, after well-nigh a twelvemonth's dumbness, was loosed of a sudden, only to predict in tones of unmistakable inspiration the speedy coming of the Redeemer, before whose face John was to walk as forerunner and aid. Thus the national expectation was raised. But, amid political decay and humiliation, the hopes of the many, if not almost of the totality, were set upon a King-Messiah, — a mighty Son of David, who should lift the nation up to a proud pre-eminence, superior even to that given to it by David and Solomon. To this anointed king of their own venerated line, John, they conceived, would serve as a potent auxiliary, somewhat as Elias would have served a king like the good Joshaphat, instead of being the bane of the wicked Achab. To their mind rose up a vision of a sovereign irresistible in might, and incomparable in goodness, at whose beck John would fly "in the spirit of Elias," from one end of Judæa to another, flashing God's judgment in the faces of all who dared to withstand the power of the Messiah-King, or the will of Jehovah.

It was only the very few, pure of heart, humble of soul, and faithful in their lives, that could read in a supernatural light the "mystery hidden from the beginning of the world," the secret of God's redeeming and repairing power to be displayed and glorified through infinite abasement. The shepherds on whom came down the light and the angelic songs of triumph on the hillside of Bethlehem, were, perhaps, given to know clearly what was concealed from prince and pontiff, — that the Blessed Seed of Abraham, the long-expected Son of David, was to go forth to battle and victory and redemption with the shepherd's staff and sling, and the pebble from the brook, and not with the panoply of earthly might.

It was as a prelude to the triumph of the Crucified by the extremity of shame and weakness, that the Holy Spirit schooled John to all manner of self-denial from his very childhood. "And the child grew, and was strengthened in spirit, and was in the

deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel." That Elisabeth watched over his cradle with a feeling of mixed tenderness, veneration, and awe, inspired by her knowledge of the unheard-of gifts bestowed upon him as the earnest of his future sanctity and greatness, need not be insisted on here. There is no love so strong and so true as the love of a saintly soul; and when that soul is that of a mother, and a mother like Elisabeth, it is not difficult to divine the depth and purity of its affection for an only and thrice blessed boy. Surely she must have hastened to Bethlehem when she heard of Christ's birth there, and of the sanguinary means taken by the old distempered tyrant, Herod, to secure the destruction of the royal babe; or if the two families could not meet before the flight into Egypt, and the return of Mary and Joseph to Nazareth, Elisabeth could not have failed to repay the visit of benediction made to herself at Juttah, all the more so that she knew what an increase of blessing to her boy, her husband, and herself, the intercourse with the holy family was certain to bring.

There is no further record of Elisabeth in the Gospels. We do not know whether her advanced age permitted her to see her boy grow up to man's estate, to witness his first ministrations, to be present among the crowds who flocked to hear his glowing words, and to gaze upon the pale young face, the long Nazarite locks, and the garment of camel's hair bound by a leathern girdle. She had learned from the spirit of Christ within her, that only one other mother was more blessed in a Son than herself. It had been given her to see face to face what Eve and Sara and Rebecca and Rachel had yearned for, the Hope of Ages in a mother's arms on a mother's breast; and she died happy, as woman before her never died. Her name, like her faith, and many other sweet virtues with which we may justly believe her adorned, lived long ages after, in many of the greatest and loveliest women that have graced Christian nations; in Saint Elisabeth of Hungary, "the Mother of the Poor," and in her grand-daughter, Saint Elisabeth of Portugal, and in another, descended from both, that noble Elisabeth, or Isabella, who sent Columbus to America.

XXI.

The Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ.

WE beheld our first parents, after their sentence, passing through the gate of the earthly paradise, sorrowing, but hopeful, into the wide world to be peopled by their descendants; while the angel with flaming sword stood there to forbid their return. Their sorrow was lightened by the certainty of forgiveness, and by the hope that the Restorer just mercifully promised to them and their offspring would repair, in the fullness of time, the ruin wrought by their own transgression. Through the parallel lines of prophetic men and women, we have now also passed down to the appointed time, when angelic voices bid us into the presence of the second Adam and the second Eve, to behold the divine hand taking up anew the plan of our adoption and deification, suspended, but not abandoned, and to be wrought out to completion in the Incarnation and its consequences.

It is a new creation: every individual man, woman, and child has a personal interest in the parents of that regenerated humanity in which God is about to display the wonders of his grace. We are at Nazareth. Just where the coast-ridge of Lebanon, at its southern extremity, breaks up into groups of high hills before sinking down into the plain of Jezreel, a few miles from Thabor, Sunam, and Endor, — the scenes of Debbora's triumph, and of Saul's and Jezabel's overthrow and punishment, — lies, nestling at the edge of a little valley in the hills, the lovely village of Nazareth. Lovely it is in our day, in spite of the sad changes wrought throughout the land by so many centuries of war and misgov-

ernment; surpassingly lovely it must have been two thousand years ago, with its fields of waving grain on the narrow level, and the groves of oaks, orange-trees, fig-trees, pomegranates, and olives covering the hillsides in every direction. It was full spring-tide — the 25th of March — when occurred the ever-memorable event that we are desirous of approaching with infinite reverence. Two persons dwelt there outside of their own tribe; for Nazareth belongs to the tribe of Zabulon; and Joseph and Mary are both of the tribe of Juda, — nay, both lineal descendants of King David. Why they resided there in enforced obscurity, — for Joseph plied the trade of a carpenter, — it were unimportant to inquire, did we not know that the aged Herod's insane jealousy would brook no son or daughter of David to contest the claims of his dynasty. This same cause might account for their poverty, were it not that He who would have the forerunner of his Incarnate Son practice all the self-denial of the Nazarites, had inspired this royal pair, who were to be nearer and dearer still to the Messiah, to embrace a condition that left them free to follow him whithersoever his Spirit might lead.

Three months before the birth of the Baptist, in pursuance of the design which began to have its execution in the vision of Zachary, the "fullness of time" had arrived; and from before the throne of the Highest the same angelic messenger was dispatched to perfect the accomplishment of what is God's work above all others. "The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel, being come in, said unto her, Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women. Who, having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be."

The lowly maiden, among the many graces with which her soul overflowed, possessed, above all, humility, and was alarmed, not so much by the presence of the angel as by the reverence with which he addressed her. The divine favors already lavished on her have not begotten pride. It is a characteristic of Christian sanctity, that its possessors, while intensely grateful to the

Heroines of the New Testament.

Heroines of the New Testament.

Elisabeth, Mother of the Forerunner.

The Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ.

The Woman of Samaria.

The Widow of Naïm

The Daughter of Jaïrus.

Mary Magdalene.

Martha and Mary.

The Widow's Mite.

Women of the Apostolic Time.

Divine Goodness for every favor in the natural and supernatural order, are ever most painfully conscious of their own shortcomings. The nearer God lifts them to himself, the more exalted becomes their ideal of moral perfection, and the more severely do they compare what they are at the present moment with what they might and ought to be. But the dignity that awaits Mary, singular and incommunicable as it is, has never entered into the visions of attainable holiness presented to her mind by the Spirit of God.

The angel calms her fears by announcing the object of his mission. She is divinely chosen in the eternal counsels to be the mother of the long-promised Redeemer, Jesus. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." The youth of Mary, her voluntary or enforced obscurity, and her having placed herself as an affianced bride under the protection of a kinsman in every way fitted to guard such a treasure, have not deadened in her bosom the yearning for the appearance of "the Orient from on high," and the longing for the restoration of her own royal house. Patriotism and religion were intended by God to be one undivided and absorbing sentiment in the breast of every Hebrew woman as well as man. The daughter of David, then, must have been thrilled by the heaven-sent assurance of the resurrection of David's line, of the coming glory and eternity of the new kingdom. But that it should be through son of hers overwhelms her. Genuine humility is not littleness of soul: it merely gives the soul an intense feeling of the distance which exists between what our own will has made of us, and what God wills us to be. It is, therefore, at bottom, a vivid sense of the deficiency of one's own will in conforming with the divine. But when it becomes clearly known to such a soul that God requires of her the sublimest efforts of self-sacrifice, her very humility being a supernatural and irresistible tendency toward accomplishing his purpose, she puts forth a strength and a magnanimity all divine in doing what is most heroic and painful.

Did the divine light which must have flooded that favored soul on this occasion — unique in the whole economy of the supernatural government — enable Mary to perceive that, to become the mother of the second Adam, she must fulfill the part of the second Eve; that his triumph must be through suffering; that his diadem was to be a crown of thorns, and his death that of an executed criminal, the horror and abomination of his race, and of all civilized people? If so, her acceptance of the proffered dignity meant a share in all this shame and torture of soul. Thus was humility satisfied: it should have its sublimest realization in the cross, and her association with the Crucified.

Light having been given her to understand the operations of Divine Power, and the scruples both of her humility and her purity having been removed by the words of the angel, she bows herself to the Divine Will, and accepts the awful responsibilities of mother of the Redeemer. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her."

She has been told by him that her cousin Elisabeth has also been chosen, as the mother of the great saint who is to go before the Incarnate God to herald his coming to Israel. Her first impulse, after the accomplishment of the divine mystery, is one of charity, so befitting the mother of the God of charity. She will not lose a moment in bearing to the house of Elisabeth the blessing of his presence; thus showing that the interests of souls, the interests dearest to the heart of her Son, are from that hour her sole care. "And Mary, rising up in those days, went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda." From Nazareth to the southern extremities of Juda and Carmel, her path lay through many of the great historic scenes of the Old Testament. Did Debbora and Judith exult in their graves as the mighty Deliverer passed by? Did Rachel's ashes in her tomb at Bethlehem feel the near presence of Him who is the resurrection and the life? And as the lowly maiden-mother hurried past Hebron, where Abraham and Sara repose with Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Lia, were the blessed souls of these great ancestors of the Man-God permitted to revisit the

earth, and to join the guardian angels of the place, as they contemplated and worshiped the Mighty One, still concealed to mortal eye behind the veils of the tabernacle?

In presence of the infinite self-abasement of God made man, who could dare to be lifted up? In contact with the burning fire of Christ's charity, who could remain a narrow lover of self? Who would not catch the ardor of self-sacrifice from the near approach of the future Lamb of Calvary?

When Elisabeth kneels in presence of the Holy of Holies, borne across her threshold by the mother whose dignity is revealed to her, and allows the Spirit within her to utter her gratitude and praise "with a loud cry," Mary, as if she beheld God face to face, and in his light read all the secrets of the world's future, uttered that canticle which has been ever since the song of Christian triumph and thanksgiving: —

> "My soul doth magnify the Lord,
> And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,
> Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid;
> For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;
> For he that is mighty hath done great things to me,
> And holy is his name."

Three months did Mary abide with Elisabeth, not seeking the public eye, but both of them communing with God in prayer, in obedience to the Holy Spirit who filled them, and increasing in their own souls the zeal for his glory and the salvation of his people. So entirely does Mary trust to the divine wisdom to disclose the secret of her heart, that, on her return to Nazareth, she makes no mention of it to Joseph. She is rewarded for her absolute trust: an angel is sent to this prudent and God-fearing man to apprise him of the treasure lying hidden beneath his roof. He is thenceforth to be the faithful steward in God's family on earth, guarding and cherishing the two beings in all creation most precious in the sight of Heaven, — that exalted Mother and her Babe. He, too, if not in very deed a Nazarite like John, received "a portion above his brethren:" Christ in his helpless infancy and boyhood was to be his sole care and portion. Christ and his mother were to look up to him, under God's providence,

as their head, guide, and support. He could not but understand, once the angel of the Lord had revealed Mary's secret to him, that of all just men whom Heaven had most favored till then, none were so privileged as himself; for beneath his lowly roof he now held the new parents of restored humanity foreshown to Adam and to Eve. On his head were accumulated the blessings prophesied by Jacob to the first Joseph (Gen. xlix. 25, 26), "the blessings of heaven above, with the blessings of the deep that lieth beneath, until the desire of the everlasting hills shall come." He has come: ere long Joseph shall look upon his face, and hold him in his arms, and hear his voice uttering words of filial love and gratitude. But we are again anticipating.

At this very time, one great political power overshadowed all others, extending its influence from the Mediterranean as center, to all the civilized portions of the three adjoining continents: one mighty empire, with Rome as its capital, had replaced all those that had oppressed mankind since the days of the Assyrian Nimrod. It was at peace, too, throughout its length and breadth. It had forced Herod, like the rest of its tributary kings, to cease all hostile expeditions, though its representative in Jerusalem could not compel the hoary infidel to stay his hand from domestic murder. Augustus Cæsar, who ruled supreme over the pacified East and West, had commanded a general census to be made of all his subjects: all Hebrew natives of Palestine had to repair to their birthplaces, to be there registered, and to pay each a tax to the imperial officers. It was a cunningly-devised scheme for filling the Roman treasury, and gratifying the Roman vanity; but it was both oppressive and vexatious. And perhaps Herod favored the avarice or the vanity of Augustus to further his own private aims; for all the members of David's family having to go to Bethlehem, his birthplace, the spies of the tyrant could watch them, and thus ascertain the names of all who had a claim to royal descent.

In Bethlehem, both Joseph and Mary were born, and thither they are compelled to go. A distance of some eighty miles separates it from Nazareth; and this long journey, in mid-winter, was probably made on foot; or perhaps, despite his poverty,

Joseph could provide his companion with the best and safest means of conveyance in Eastern hill-countries, — an ass. We may assume it for certain that he omitted no exertion or sacrifice to lighten Mary's fatigue; but conscious of whom they bore with them, and with the presentiment of the mighty event about to take place, they did not feel the hardship of the road, or the inclemencies of the season.

They are treading once more the fertile valleys and terraced hillsides familiar to their childhood. When Ruth and Noemi arrived there from the land of Moab, it was April, the season of barley-harvest: it is now December as our wayfarers, with God's angels invisibly guarding them, ascend the slope that leads to Bethlehem. The place is crowded, and crowded with their own town's-people or kinsfolk. Their nearest and dearest are there. The East has ever been most hospitable, even to the passing stranger, still more so to man or woman who can lay claim to ties of blood. We have read of the kindly welcome given to the widowed Noemi, as well as to the alien Ruth, and remember the large-hearted generosity of Booz, and his chivalrous delicacy toward the young stranger woman who threw herself upon his manly honor.

But here are two descendants of Booz and Ruth on the very spot made illustrious by the virtues of both, and coming, perhaps, as is natural, to seek the very door into which Booz welcomed as a bride the widow of his kinsman. Certain it is, that, if Joseph sought hospitality for his companion among his kinsfolk, he found none. The houses in which both were born were doubtless there; but, whether occupied by their own relatives or by strangers, they offered no shelter to Joseph and Mary at the end of their long journey. St. John the evangelist, the beloved disciple, to whom that blessed mother was intrusted from the cross, says of the Incarnate Word, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Every door is closed against the Messiah, the Son of David, in David's own city. No heart seemed to compassionate the need of that weary young mother; no womanly hand was extended to her in all that great

crowd; and, when they were compelled to go to the public inn to find a resting-place for the night, "there was no room for them in the inn." Let us not complain of the callousness of men, nor accuse even the citizens of Bethlehem of inhumanity. Joseph and Mary did not complain; nor is there on record one word of blame uttered against the Bethlehemites by Him who was in their midst, and they "knew him not;" who came to be born among them of all the world, and they "received him not." The travelers betook themselves to one of the caves in the hillside, where the poorest wayfarers and the animals they rode could find a shelter in the night; and there the Christ was born. "And she [Mary] brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger." From that manger to the cross on Calvary, — such is the race of self-abasement, poverty, suffering, and shame that Jesus is to run. The glory of his mother is, that she will share it with him. She kneels adoringly now before his manger-throne: we shall see her presently standing beneath the cross, sorrowing, but worshiping still. For who better than such a mother could sound the depths of his humiliations, and find therein the revelation of a strength all divine?

Who are those that are first summoned to that cave, where lies — cast by the wayside, a little babe — the God of the poor and the lowly? Shepherds, guarding their flocks by night. "And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them." To them "and to all the people" of Israel, — nay, to the whole earth, — the angelic visitor brings "tidings of great joy." "This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David." They must not fear either the brightness that surrounds the messenger, nor stand in awe of the new-born King and his court. "This shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger." What a sign to give to these poor ones of Israel, by which to recognize the Saviour, the Messiah, who is to be so "great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and . . . shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever"! That they did not at once penetrate this mystery of abjection is not surprising. But "suddenly

there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." Every footstep of the lowly Saviour thenceforth, to his triumphant ascension, shall be attended by that same angelic multitude; nor shall one of those, men or women, whom he chooses to continue his work, fail to have, like Elisæus, a host of these same heavenly warriors as the witnesses of their struggles and triumphs.

The shepherds go in haste to Bethlehem, and find "Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. And, seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child. And all that heard wondered. . . . But Mary kept all these words, pondering [them] in her heart." The sole study of her life was Christ and his mysteries; and, knowing him better than all others, she walked more closely in his footsteps, treading, not in those paths where honor and applause might reach her on his account, but in the ways of obscurity, deep enlightened love, and heroic suffering.

Did the report of the shepherds, when spread abroad among the inhabitants of Bethlehem and its vicinity, bring any change to the position of Mary and her babe? Or did the crowd of strangers continue to ebb and flow there, causing them to be forgotten in their rude shelter? In the sacred text there is no indication of a change. The eighth day came, and the child was brought to the priest, and received the name of Jesus. But the name was not an unusual one, and attracted no special notice; nor did Mary or Joseph disclose aught of its revealed import. In Bethlehem they continued till the fortieth day, when the law prescribed that every first-born son should be presented in the temple of Jerusalem, and that the mother should offer for herself in sacrifice a lamb and a dove. They were too poor to buy a lamb, and presented, instead, a pair of doves. But the true Lamb was there as well, in whom all previous sacrifices should find their fulfillment: no mother ever offered so precious a victim within that holy place. If the prophetic light vouchsafed to her already had enabled her to read the mystery of her son's sacrifice, as she had penetrated that of his birth, how much there must have been

in the temple itself, as well as in the great city outside, to fill her soul with sorrowful anticipations! And these were presently to be confirmed.

The royal Virgin had made her humble offering of doves, and Joseph had presented the divine child before the sanctuary; the priest had "prayed for her," as the Mosaic ritual ordered; and parents and babe were about to withdraw as quietly as they had entered the hallowed precincts. But two souls were worshiping there, whose hearts had been filled during a long life with fervent hopes of the dawn of the deferred redemption. The scepter had passed from Juda, nay, from Jacob's entire posterity, into the hands of the Idumæan Herod, the offspring of the rejected Esau; and in Jerusalem itself the ensigns of Roman dominion and Roman idolatry were displayed in the abode of the imperial representative. It was a sign that all could read who knew the prophecies, and expected hourly their accomplishment. "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the spirit into the temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he also took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

> Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord,
> According to thy word, in peace:
> Because my eyes have seen thy salvation,
> Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples:
> A light to the revelation of the Gentiles,
> And the glory of thy people Israel.

And his father and mother were wondering at these things which were spoken concerning him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, Behold this [child] is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel,

of the tribe of Aser: she was far advanced in years, and had lived with her husband seven years. . . . And she was a widow until fourscore and four years: who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day. Now she at the same hour coming in confessed to the Lord [Jesus], and spoke of him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel."

To long-tried fidelity in the divine service, to living faith and hope adorned by purity of soul and generous victories over the life of the senses, are revealed the presence of the Saviour, the fruits of his labors, the bitter "contradiction" and persecution, ending with his early death, and the soul-agony of his mother.

Even then both "the resurrection" of the long-dead nations was beginning to be realized, and the first bloody persecution was at hand. Mary and Joseph went back to Bethlehem, and took up their abode, in all likelihood, in the spot most dear to them of all the earth, — the cave wherein the Word made flesh was born. From the Far East, from the Bactrian plains, or the banks of the Lower Euphrates, "wise men" — men learned in the astrology so carefully taught and practiced there, but imbued as well with the supernatural wisdom inculcated and left behind by such men as Daniel and Ezechiel, or spread broadcast among the surrounding heathen by elevated souls like Job — are rewarded for their heroic faith. A preternatural light appears to them in the heavens, and "an answer" from the Lord, such as that vouchsafed to Simeon, as a response to their anxious inquiries in prayer, warning them that "the Star of Jacob" has arisen in the West. They may have often communed together, before now, about the irremediable disorders in which the whole East was steeped, and speculated upon the near fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and prayed with united voice for the dawning of the light amid the ever-deepening gloom. Lo! there is the first streak of day, and there the morning star, beckoning them across the Mesopotamian plains, and the wide desert that lies between them and Judæa. They have arrived in Jerusalem in the well-known garb of their countries, and go straight to their purpose: "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to adore him."

Herod is in Jerusalem, and is startled by this strange arrival and by the stranger queries reported of the pilgrims. He knows enough of the religion which he professes and betrays, to be a believer in the Messiah. But he will have no Messiah "king of the Jews." The chief priests and doctors whom he assembles read to him clearly the text of Micheas, pointing to Bethlehem of Juda as the place whence "shall come forth the Captain that shall rule . . . Israel." From the wise men themselves he privately learned the date of the heavenly apparition, "and, sending them to Bethlehem, said, Go and diligently inquire after the child, and, when you have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and adore him."

The miraculous star guided them to "the child with Mary his mother; and, falling down, they adored him; and, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And, having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country."

Did no tears of joy well up from that blessed mother's heart, as she beheld at the feet of her babe, prostrate in ecstatic adoration, these first-fruits of the nations from afar? They are gone as they came — in haste: their path lies not toward Jerusalem, where a dark and unsparing state-policy is plotting the destruction of the Prince of peace, and their own as well; but God's angel guides them safely towards their people, whom they are to leaven with their own faith.

"And after they were departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying, Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee. . . . Who arose, and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt; and he was there until the death of Herod."

This sudden flight, and parting with country and all held most dear, and loved with a surpassing love by those whose affections are purified and exalted by the spirit of God; this sudden pang of fear at the approach of a terrible and unforeseen danger, — was the first entering of the sword into Mary's soul. It penetrated Joseph's heart as well; for both were intrusted to him, and he

knew that God's special guidance over his charge and himself did not relieve him from the ordinary exertions and industries of a prudent head of a family. Instantly, and in the dead of night, without hesitation or murmur, and trusting themselves to the ever-watchful care of Providence, they betook them to flight. Not a moment too soon; for the spies of Herod had warned him of the departure of the wise men, and his minions were already on their way to Bethlehem. The fugitives were yet amid the secret passes of Carmel, when the sword of the first persecutor "killed all the men-children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old, and under."

While guarding jealously the precious life of his son, God will spare him, and his mother and guardian, none of the hardships of their long and perilous journey. What they endured till their arrival in Egypt He alone knows, who would have Christ and his followers court, and not fear, humiliations. Nor do we know, either, by what road they reached Egypt, or in what place they fixed their temporary abode.

The insane jealousy of Herod the Great had filled Bethlehem and its neighborhood with horror and desolation a short time before his death; and his fevered brain and evil conscience caused him to order a general massacre in Jerusalem simultaneously with his death; so that he might be buried amid general lamentation. No sooner had his son Archelaus succeeded his father with the title of ethnarch, or chief of his nation, than the angel again ordered Joseph to return to Judæa. He obeyed with the same prompt and unreasoning faith. It was a long, weary way for persons so poor and so ill-provided; and when one remembers what the treasure was, that the young mother bore with her so tenderly along these rugged paths, never trodden without fear by the boldest, one can not marvel at the thousand beautiful incidents with which the fancy of Christian poets and artists have loved to adorn each day's travel and repose. Assuredly they formed a touching group, on what road soever we consider them traveling toward the land of Israel, — that mother and her tender infant facing the frightful solitudes and torrid passes of the Sinaitic peninsula, or journeying along the Desert of Sin, while

Joseph watched over them as over the life of his soul, cheering the lonely way, and relieving, as best he might, their every need. How his heart was lightened when the first spurs of Carmel rose up before their eyes in the distance! "But, hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judæa in the room of Herod, his father, he was afraid to go thither; and, being warned in sleep, retired into the quarters of Galilee. And, coming, he dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets: That he shall be called a Nazarene." The title was nailed to his cross.

Thenceforward, till his thirtieth year, Christ continued to abide at Nazareth, passing, in the eyes of the people of the place, for the son of Joseph. The veil which covered his origin and dignity was never raised by either parent. While John the Baptist at an early age sought the solitudes between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, leading there a life of prayer, meditation, and austerity, Jesus dwelt at Nazareth, practicing, not only the virtues ordinary to children at every successive stage, from infancy to youth and manhood, but devoting himself, like Joseph, to the occupation of a carpenter. We ask ourselves with wonder why it is that Christ, whose mind, from the first instant that his soul was united to the person of the Word Eternal, was flooded with knowledge and wisdom natural and supernatural, should have buried his light in that obscure little valley among the hills of Galilee. We are apt to look upon this portion of his life on earth as lost, and disposed to blame either the influence exercised on him by his mother, or the poverty of Joseph, or, again, to criticise the divine economy, for permitting these precious, teeming years of his boyhood and youth to be spent in a little country town, while the dispersed and idolatrous descendants of Adam remained without the benefit of his ministrations and miracles. What could not Christ have done in the space of thirty years?

We forget that these long years of obscurity, obedience, progress in wisdom, in every manly virtue, and in patient, uncomplaining toil beneath the carpenter's roof, were destined by the Eternal Wisdom to serve as the most eloquent and effective of

lessons for the immense majority of men in every age and country. The over-burdened children of toil to-day, as in the days of Christ, as every day till time shall be no more, need the teaching and the example of Joseph the son of royal David, and of Jesus the Incarnate Word, to enable them to find obscurity sweet, and obedience easy, and the persevering toil of years endurable.

There is more than that: we are not unfrequently tempted to think and say that the life of his mother, the second Eve, and the model of her sex wherever Christianity prevails, is one of comparative nullity. And yet, on opening the Gospel of St. Luke, we are attracted by the heavenly beauty of that virgin soul, before whom the archangel bends, and which he hails as "full of grace." We can not but share his feeling of reverence, when we penetrate the motives of her hesitation to accept the sublime rank offered to her; and reverence becomes filial love when we behold Mary, now mother of the Lord, rising hastily, and speeding from one end of the country to the other, to aid in sanctifying before his birth the Great Forerunner of her Son. And then the glorious song in which she exalts the divine power and goodness, and proclaims her own littleness, and, above all, the sublime resignation with which she accepts her own share in the humiliation of Bethlehem, and the sufferings of exile! Is she, then, less admirable, because her life at Nazareth is merged in that of her Son? Let every mother and daughter who will read these pages, and take time to ponder what is here intended to be taught, lay this truth to heart, — that the future of the world, the greatness and happiness of every country, depend on the growth of true manhood within the obscurity and hallowed quiet of the Christian home. Every natural and supernatural virtue and excellence that goes to make up the true man in the home of the laborer and mechanic, as well as in that of the rich, the learned, the noble, and the great, is a fruit of the mother's sowing and ripening. We, in our day and generation, are impatient of home restraints, and slow, progressive culture: one such son as David or Samuel is glory enough for any mother. When Christ left his loved retirement at Nazareth, and filled Judæa with his name, it was said of him, "He hath done all things well." What mother

could desire sweeter praise for her life-labors, or a more complete eulogy on her dear ones? And since Christ's life and examples have become an influence of every day and moment, during these past eighteen hundred years, how many mothers have found light and strength in the virtues that shine forth to the attentive eye within that lowly abode of Mary at Nazareth!

And here, not unaptly, comes in the sole interruption mentioned in the gospel to the uniformity of the private life at Nazareth. The scrupulous care with which Mary and Joseph fulfilled, as we have seen, the prescriptions of the Mosaic law, was further instanced in their going up yearly to Jerusalem for the paschal solemnities. "And, when he was twelve years old, they going up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, and, having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not." His conduct on this occasion proves both that he possessed that fullness and maturity of wisdom necessary to the discharge of the duty of public teacher, had he been disposed to undertake it from that moment; and that, in all that pertained to the exercise of his messianic office, which belonged to the divine order, he would assert a perfect independence, both for himself and for his followers. This done, he will, in conformity with what has been said above, resume his relation of a docile and humble child in the household, till the divinely appointed time has arrived.

The alarm of Joseph and Mary on discovering the absence of their son was natural enough; and the agony of the mother's heart, as she bent her steps back to Jerusalem, and failed to discover him, either on the road, or during the three-days' search made in the city, was but too well justified by the circumstances of the times. The two sons and successors of Herod — Archelaus in Judæa, and Herod Antipas in Galilee — were, in cruelty and tyranny, worthy of their sire. Archelaus had slain six thousand men at one time in the temple and its precincts during the paschal celebration; and Antipas was the murderer of John the Baptist. Remembering the massacre of Bethlehem, her motherly heart might still dread the sword of Herod suspended over her

child. Hence the tender words of half-reproach when they found him in the temple, discussing deep questions with the doctors: "Son, why hast thou done so to us?" But as she mentions Joseph as his "father," and seems to intimate the claims of his paternal authority, Christ answers, in words which he leaves her to ponder, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" How much or how little of his eternal Sonship, and of the interior life of the Triune God, it had pleased him to disclose to them through all these years, we know not. The clear knowledge of the Trinity, as well as of the abysmal depths of the divine nature and life, is reserved as the reward of faith to the beatific vision. When and how the Son shall set about doing the work on which the Father hath sent him is a divine secret. She kept the lesson in her heart; and he resumed his life of obscurity, obedience, and toil.

St. Joseph is mentioned no more in the New Testament. The tradition of the early church will have it that he died at Nazareth, as Jesus attained man's estate. Surely it was a blissful ending of that humble, devoted, and unspotted life, to close his eyes, tended and cheered, blessed and loved, by the two beings to whom he had consecrated his existence. His career, the hidden labors and virtues of Jesus and his mother, as well as those of the Baptist in the wilderness, are like those cool springs in the desert, whose vivifying qualities are blessed and praised by every traveler that finds refreshment by their brink, but whose origin is known to God alone; for no hand but his has dug out their dark caves beneath the earth, given them their crystal purity and saving virtues, and prepared the secret channels by which they emerge to the light to refresh the spot that gives them birth, and make it green and beautiful and shady, — a resting-place for man in the midst of his pilgrimage.

The time came when the widowed Mary was to be deprived of the support of her son, and to be left dependent on her kinsfolk, or on the generosity of the first disciples. The parting was the second piercing of her soul by the sword of Simeon's prophecy. But she had learned too much in Christ's school, not to make the event one of joyous self-sacrifice. From that moment, her dwell-

ing-place was fixed at Capharnaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, near its northern extremity. There, too, and with her, was to be fixed, during his whole public life, the ordinary residence of our Lord: for both of them it was gratuitous hospitality accepted from some good soul, like that given to Elisæus by the Sunamite lady.

Mary is brought twice prominently into notice by the evangelists before the last terrible scenes in Jerusalem. The first time was at Cana, a village situated in the hill-country, some miles due north of Nazareth, and on the occasion of a wedding. Our Lord had been publicly baptized and proclaimed by John as the expected Messiah: the voice of the Eternal Father, and the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, had confirmed this testimony in the sight of the assembled multitude; and he had returned northward, accompanied by several disciples, among whom was Nathanael, a native of Cana. Of the others, Andrew and Simon Peter, and John and James, were also Galileans, fishermen from the shore-villages to the south of Capharnaum. The Master and his little band of disciples reached Cana on the third day after they had left the scene of John's labors on the Jordan. They, with the blessed mother, were the chief guests at the feast.

The occasion has ever been held, both in the Eastern and Western Church, as one intimately connected with the reform effected by our Lord in the institution of matrimony. It was the divine purpose that the second Adam and the second Eve should be the active instruments in restoring marriage to its original sanctity and unity. She, representing here the Church, the mother of regenerated humanity, will have a care that a new wine be miraculously supplied at the feast, just as from her virginal veins was drawn the blood, figured by the wine, which hallows and revivifies the source of human life, as it is the sanctifying principle of every other sacrament and rite in the New Law. Thus with one voice speak the great early martyrs and church teachers; thus speaks St. Paul, when he calls the matrimonial union, and the mutual love of husband and wife, a great sacrament or mystery, because having for its ideal or exemplar the love of Christ for his church, and their indissoluble union: "This is a great sacrament;

but I speak in Christ and in the church. . . . Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, nor any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So, also, ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the church" (Eph. v.).

The very first miracle recorded of the divine Author of the New Law — the changing of water into wine — is thus identified, in the sense of all Christian ages, with the elevation of the primitive matrimonial ordinance to the rank of a great sacrament, the hallowing thus of the tie that binds together husband and wife, the blessing of the whole stream of human existence by infusing into it Christ's blood and the merits of his passion, and the nourishing of the whole human family with those ever-present and efficacious influences derived from the constant application of his blood. For it is impossible to exaggerate the exalted notion which the Church entertains of this holy state, and of the sacrament by which Christians enter into it, or to overestimate the supernatural graces or aids which it is the purpose of this sacrament to set apart and store up, as in a sacred deposit, for the spiritual needs of husband and wife in keeping their own mutual love pure and unchanged, and in discharging their manifold duties toward children and household. The strength of a nation is made up of the aggregate strength of the families that compose it; and the strength of each family lies in the inviolable respect and maintenance of this institution. To touch it, to alter it, is to move the foundations of the earth.

Such, then, is the august importance of the marriage-feast of Cana, and such the significance of the presence of Christ and his mother. It was held in the neighborhood of Nazareth, among the familiar acquaintance of both; and it is not improbable that the bride and bridegroom may have been of their kindred. And, besides, Mary may have had some share in the preparations of the

banquet. But these considerations, while accounting naturally for the presence of both, are of little importance when compared to the spiritual purpose our Lord had in view. The festivities lasted several days, and the wine gave out. Mary's watchful eye had detected this; and the secret prompting of the Holy Spirit urged her to say to her son, "They have no wine." It was a womanly and motherly act. But for the sake of his disciples and future fellow-workers there present, as well as for the instruction of all, he will have her and them understand that what he is going to do, and what she evidently expects him to do, belongs to the divine order, in which the claims or obligations of flesh and blood must not influence the dispenser of God's mysteries. "And Jesus saith to her, Woman [or Lady], what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters, Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye." St. Augustine interprets Christ's answer as meaning that the solemn occasion for acknowledging his filial duty to his mother had not yet arrived, but that when he had consummated his redemptorial office by dying on the cross, at his latest hour, when hanging there, he would proclaim her his mother, and himself her son. At any rate, she does not take his words as a rebuke; nor does he refuse to comply with her charitable request. It is clear that she had a supernatural knowledge of the miracle that ensued. The eloquence of facts should explain what may be doubtful or dark in the idiomatic expressions of a foreign language, or the style of address in use among a people so different in every way from ourselves. On the other hand, the petition of Mary has been held up as a model of that confidence and humility which should ever be found in prayer. She knows both the power and the goodness of her son, states in the simplest terms the need of those in whose behalf she is pleading, and leaves the rest to him. Such is also the way in which Martha and her sister Mary represent the case of Lazarus: "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." In both cases, a stupendous miracle is demanded: it is granted in both; whereas it would have been refused, if the asking had been deemed an unwarrantable interference with the exercise of supernatural power.

In a similar way, in order not to fail in respect to our Lord, as well as to his mother, must we interpret the passage Matt. xii. 48, 49. It relates to an incident that happened more than a year and a half after the marriage-feast at Cana. In the interval, Christ had celebrated the passover twice, and had twice made the circuit of Galilee, which was then so populous that it contained two hundred and four towns and villages. The multitudes that surrounded him night and day, and their demands upon his time, were such, that he had not even leisure "to eat bread." "And it was told him, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. Who, answering, said to them, My mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of God, and do it." He was on his Messianic work; and he would have all understand that its freedom, independence, and dignity required that it should be entirely above all the cares and claims of family or relationship; just as elsewhere he says to the young man called to follow him, and asking to go home to bury his father, "Allow the dead to bury their dead."

Meanwhile, the legitimate influence of Christ's mother, in the obscure sphere to which both her own inclination and her son's will confined her, was not inactive; and its results can be guessed at by the numbers of pious and devoted women who ministered to his wants and those of his disciples, following him, despite the persecutions of an adverse public opinion, through all his labors in Galilee, and from Galilee to Judæa, and to Jerusalem and the cross. It is in this last stage of his mortal career that we shall find Mary by his side.

She is not mentioned as having been present during his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. That would not have been in keeping with what is revealed of her personal history in the Gospels, nor yet with what was preserved in the earliest traditions. Doubtless, she came up in good season for the annual paschal festivity. Nor can she have been kept in ignorance of the prophetic utterances of Christ concerning his approaching death: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be

mocked, and scourged, and spit upon. And, after they have scourged him, they will put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things." Not so the Mother, "full of grace" from the beginning, filled with the Holy Ghost afterward, and with the spirit of prophecy; who treasured in her heart, and there pondered deeply, every utterance concerning him, from the hour that Simeon predicted her own great sorrow.

She is not spoken of as having been present at the last supper: that, in the mind of the Church, was a privileged re-union, where the twelve — who were to be the immediate depositaries of the Redeemer's power, the chosen builders of his kingdom, and the fathers of the new people that he was about to create upon earth — were to be made the objects of special prayers and special graces, the recipients of his divinest gifts, the witnesses of his united humility and charity in the washing of feet, and of his soul's agony in the garden.

In that garden, ever since so sacred to Christian piety, and on the spot on which his sweat of blood had flowed in great drops from his garments to the ground, the atonement began. Sold into the power of his enemies by one apostle, dragged before the high priest at midnight, and treated like one convicted of the highest crimes, he sees himself forsaken by all but two of the other apostles; and of these one denies him openly and with a solemn asseveration, while the other escapes with great difficulty from the violent grasp of his Master's tormentors, re-appearing afterward when the fearful tragedy was at its height, and in company with the Blessed Mother. Did John fly from that scene, where Jesus, during the remaining hours of the night, was blindfolded and buffeted, and mocked and spit upon, but to sustain and comfort her, and be by her side at the dawn of that day, memorable among all days named on earth or in heaven? The pious women who "had followed him from Galilee" followed him, also, through the successive stages of his passion, even to the foot of the cross. We can not deny the mother who bore him the privilege of as close a companionship, of as true a courage and constancy.

So, now that the true Moses is about to effect the deliverance, not of one people or one race, like Israel, but of Adam and Eve, with their entire progeny, we must see the true Miriam, or Mary, treading in his footsteps.

With the dawn, he is sentenced to death as a blasphemer by the grand council, and by them sent to the Roman governor, Pilate, who can alone approve and execute the sentence. By Pilate the case is referred to Herod Antipas, then present in Jerusalem, who, in his turn, sends the accused back to Pilate. Even at the early hour at which these occurrences took place, the streets of Jerusalem were alive both with the native population, and the crowds of strangers attracted thither by the paschal solemnities. Through the dense throng, Christ was brought back to Pilate's residence, derisively clad in a white garment, because, among the Romans, this was the color worn by candidates for high office. This public humiliation of him whose wisdom and holiness of life have been the admiration of all Galilee and Judæa is only the beginning for the Son as well as the mother. Let us pass over the second interrogatory of Pilate, his solemn declaration of Christ's innocence, the earnest pleading of his wife in favor of one whose innocence and holiness have been revealed to her in some extraordinary way. The firm determination of the accusers, though but a minority among the assembled multitude, and their loud and repeated demands for his death, overawe the vacillating magistrate. As Jesus is said to be of the royal blood, and a pretender to the throne of David, Pilate thinks, that, by disgracing him by a public flagellation, he will satisfy the animosity of his enemies, and for ever put down all pretensions to royalty; for the whip could not touch the back of a freeman: it was the punishment reserved to slaves. It was deemed high-treason to scourge a Roman citizen: what, then, must be the ignominy of a public scourging to a person of royal descent! To the humblest freeman or citizen, such treatment was indelible infamy, disqualifying him for holding any office whatever.

The Mosaic law limited to thirty-nine the number of lashes inflicted on a condemned criminal: the Roman law knew no such merciful limitation. Sometimes the criminal was beaten with

rods, and sometimes with thongs of raw hide or of leather; and this was by much the more dreaded punishment. It is uncertain which were used in Christ's flagellation. He was given into the hands of the Roman guard, taken into the court of the governor's palace, bound naked to a pillar; and the whole company on guard were allowed to work their own will on him. Though the accusers entered not, it is probable the disposition of the building allowed them to see and to hear every thing. There was one who would fain have entered there, and borne every blow on her own virginal flesh; for every blow sank deep into her motherly heart. How long did that scourging last? We need not inquire; nor may we tarry to mention the details added by early writers to the recital of the evangelists. No person believing in "the Lamb of God," but will love sometimes, when piety moves, or the memory of past guilt pains, to stand or kneel in spirit near that pillar, and contemplate that scene of blood. But there is worse than the scourging.

That over, the brutal soldiery unbind their victim, and seating him, most probably, on the topmost of the flight of steps leading into the palace, and in full view of the crowd, prepared for a derisive coronation of him whom the whips have dishonored, and whom Jerusalem welcomed, a few days before, with "Hosanna! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel" (John xii. 13). They "put a scarlet cloak about him," made a wreath of the cruel Eastern thorn, the acacia, and pressed it down upon his head, and placed a reed in his hand for a scepter, and approached him in succession; and, "bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. And, spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head." In this state he was brought to Pilate, who, struck with pity and remorse at the condition to which the wanton inhumanity of his soldiers had brought his prisoner, felt certain that his accusers would be satisfied. "Pilate, therefore, went forth again, and saith to them, Behold, I bring him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause [of death] in him. (Jesus, therefore, came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment.) And he saith to them, Behold the man. When the chief priests,

therefore, and the servants had seen him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him."

The bodily torture, dreadful as it must be, is as nothing here in comparison to the torture of what is most exquisitely sensitive in a soul high-born, of unspotted purity, and the most exalted affections. Love of country, esteem of one's friends, gratitude of a whole people benefited most signally by words and works, and the love of a mother (and such a mother!) present at all this shame and suffering put upon such a Son, — what a spectacle, and what a story! And yet this is still but the beginning. Mary and Moses are still on the shore of the Red Sea: their feet have not yet touched the path that leads down to the abysses.

The whole city, by this time, was abroad, and swayed by the tumultuous passions of its religious leaders. "And they took Jesus, and led him forth. And, bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha." The cross, in the days of Christ, was considered such a shameful instrument of punishment, that Cicero, in one of his orations, said of it, "The very name of cross not only should never be spoken of in connection with the body of a Roman citizen, but should never offend his mind, eyes, or ears." The wood itself was accounted an accursed thing: the wretch who died on it was called accursed: the touch of either was held to be pollution at all times. It was most especially so for the population of Jerusalem, who were beginning the paschal solemnities. So the Son of Mary, the Prince of David's house, is condemned to die the death of parricides and the worst kind of traitors. The Roman soldiers — for they it is who are to carry out the sentence of Pilate — take away the purple cloak, and clothe him with his own seamless garment, like that of the child Samuel the fruit of a mother's labor of love; and they bring forth the heavy cross. Two of the worst criminals are associated with him in this ignominious fate to confirm all the more the popular opinion of his guilt. Whether they, too, were obliged to carry their crosses through the city, is not stated. But a touching tradition says, that, when Jesus saw the wood on which he was to redeem the world, he stretched out his arms, and took it rap-

turously to his heart. O mighty heart, so tender, so true, so strong!

Through the crowded streets the melancholy procession begins to move, the Roman soldiers leading the way, and dragging after them the thorn-crowned King, on whose mangled shoulders the heavy beams press with intolerable weight, or agonize the wounded head at every jolt and inequality of the road. As they proceed, from the multitudes that fill every available standing-space, what sounds arise! Presently, when lifted on high, he will hear their cruel scoffs: do they not scoff him on his passage to Calvary? The sight of that ghastly diadem of thorns, of the blood which trickles from beneath it over his cheeks, and into his eyes; these eyes themselves half-closed with agony, and the mouth quivering with spasmodic torture, or moving silently in prayer, while the bent form moves tottering forward beneath its load. — O God! can such things have been? — from street to street, and square to square, the multitude dividing as "the cursed one" (Gal. iii. 13) approaches, repelled by the fear of contamination, and the invincible feeling of horror inspired by the sight of that "tree," and him who bears it. Thus does the true Moses divide the living waves of yonder multitude, as a new throng awaits him at every turn, and a fiercer shout of triumph and outrage greets him, like abyss after abyss of shame and anguish, opening successively beneath him, till the city walls are passed. Yet that great heart falters not, faints not: every step is firmly set upon that ground, thrice hallowed thenceforth and for ever. The virgin Mother is not far off, pressing as closely as she may in every footstep of her adored One: and he, at least, can read every throb of that faithful heart. But from the outset, the wood placed on the shoulders of Jesus was evidently a burthen beyond his strength, though not unequal to his courage: so, "as they led him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country;" and when Jesus, exhausted from loss of blood both in the garden and at the pillar, was unable to proceed farther, "they laid the cross on [Simon], to carry after Jesus." It is probable, however, that our Lord carried at least the cross-beam to the

place of crucifixion. "And there followed him a great multitude of people and of women, who bewailed and lamented him. And Jesus, turning to them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Most deserving of the eternal admiration of mankind are these generous women, — the most of them from Galilee, — who manifested their devotion to Christ during his four years of unremitting toil, by ministering to his needs and aiding him in his labors, and who now show themselves true to him, when the voice and the hand of the nation are raised against him. They gave solemn proof, on the most memorable occasion recorded in history, that supreme and invincible fidelity to deep-seated conviction, in the face of general apostasy and imminent danger, is the special attribute of womanhood.

What shall we say of the crucifixion itself, performed under the eyes of the sorrowing mother? We are on the spot where Abraham and Isaac united to build the altar to Jehovah, where the sublime old patriarch and his equally heroic son united still further in an act of obedience that stands alone even in sacred history. We see here the true Isaac stretch out his arms upon yonder altar, and allow the hands to be riven and fixed with the nails, and present to the executioners and the hammer-stroke those unwearied feet that have sought far and wide the stray ones of Israel. And, lo! they have lifted on high the bleeding form, as a cynosure for every eye among the multitudes that throng the hillside, and gaze from housetops and city walls. As a cry of horror and compassion goes up from some at this terrible sight, we know what a shout of derision is raised by others' But it is better to hearken to the words of our Lord and love: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Charity of Christ, what a lesson thou preachest, and from what a pulpit! Oh, when wilt thou bring all hearts to know and practice thy sweet law? Of the charity of the Father, who looked down upon that Victim, and gave him for all our sakes to such a death, what pen can write, or tongue speak worthily?

And the Mother? No one can separate her from him now. While the faithful few stand "afar off," and the soldiers are cast-

ing dice over their victim's seamless robe, — his only temporal possession, — while the three mortal hours of agony pass slowly away, as if they were an eternity, Mary "stood by the cross of Jesus," looking up into the loved eyes, pouring through them the mute sympathy of her unutterable tenderness into his soul, left to struggle there in prayer for the sins and needs of every soul to be born into this world of ours, and treasuring in her own motherly bosom, this true second Eve, his descending tears and blood for every child of humanity. The love of prayer that he had shown throughout his mortal career, and especially in the garden, on the eve of his passion, he displays heroically amid his very death-throes, and utters, with a voice that resounds far over Calvary, the first verse of Psalm xxi. (xxii.), "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" continuing this Messianic hymn in a low voice. This was done both to prove that he asserted himself in death to be the Messiah, and to show that his humanity suffered the extreme of pain in every affection of soul, and every member and sense of body. But though dying seemingly bereft of all aid, human and divine, and forsaken of heaven and earth, he finds a mother's love stronger than all the terrors of popular passion and national injustice. He looks down upon her where she stands near the virgin apostle, St. John; and his care for her is expressed in almost his last breath, and recorded by John himself. "When Jesus, therefore, had seen his mother and the disciple standing, whom he loved, he saith to his mother, Woman [Lady], behold thy son. After that he saith to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own."

The strong woman remained to the end. The sky was darkened, the earth shaken to its center. She heard his mighty cry when he gave up the ghost, as the shout of the victor over death and sin and hell; but, though bleeding in her inmost soul from the manifold wounds of the sword foretold by holy Simeon, she stood there still. She remained true to her post of duty, even when the cruel lance of the soldier came to pierce that sacred side, and to search with its point the lifeless Heart in which all our names are written.

Our Eve, the Mother of our Life, will not depart from beneath that tree till they have taken down its Blessed Fruit, and laid it there in her arms for our gathering and tasting. It is on that virginal bosom that every succeeding generation of Christians have loved to seek Him who is alone our soul's health and treasure. Sweet as it is to our disinherited humanity to contemplate the Heir of Life Eternal as a babe in his mother's arms, how much more sweet it is to approach him where she presents him to us at the foot of the cross, all disfigured with the blood and tears and dust of his great struggle, to approach that cleft in his side which opens as a refuge to the sinner, to come near those feet with their gaping wounds, and to take those hands so full of every blessing, and place them on head and heart, and eyes and ears and mouth, that he may create us anew the children of a divine Father and a heroic Mother!

Remembering the claims of Mary, mother of the Redeemer, upon our deepest gratitude, it may be asked here, Has there ever existed in the past, or does there exist in the present, any one Christian communion, whose acknowledged doctrinal profession of faith, or authoritative practices of devotion, sanction the belief that Mary, though the most highly favored of created beings, is any thing else but a creature, or that it is permitted to pay her in thought, or feeling, or word, or action, any reverence or worship exclusively due to the Creator? The author, after a pretty long life of study and conscientious research, replies, as he hopes for mercy from the Crucified, Not one!

Popular devotion expresses itself in a thousand different ways, according to the country, the climate, the temper of the race, the degree of culture, the pressure of public calamities, and many other circumstances that influence thought and feeling as well as the modes of conveying them: it has ever been, and ever must be, a continual struggle between authority endeavoring to inculcate pure Christian teaching, and popular feeling and passion tending to alter and corrupt it. Christ "is a God made low": Mary "is a woman made high." "But surely, when he became man, he brought home to us his incommunicable attributes with a distinctiveness which precludes the possibility of our lowering him

merely by our exalting a creature. He alone has entrance into our soul, reads our secret thoughts, speaks to our heart, applies to us spiritual pardon and strength. On him we solely depend. He alone is our inward life. . . . He is ever renewing our new birth and our heavenly sonship. In this sense he may be called, as in nature, so in grace, our real Father. Mary is only our mother by divine appointment given us from the cross: her presence is above, not on earth: her office is external, not within us. Her name is not heard in the administration of the sacraments. Her work is not one of ministration toward us: her power is indirect. It is her prayers that avail, and her prayers are effectual by the *fiat* of Him who is our all in all."

It is said of the "valiant woman," in Prov. xxxi. 28, "Her children rose up and called her blessed; her husband, and he praised her." There never existed a household in which the children did not deem it their duty to honor their father by paying reverence to the mother that bore him. For the son is honored in his parent. That singularly privileged being who gave birth to the Incarnate God, and united her sublime constancy with his divine spirit of self-sacrifice on Calvary, must ever stand in the relation of parent, of mother, to Him whom alone we adore as the Father of our souls. If, members of God's household on earth, as we claim to be, we rise up and call her "blessed," we are taught to do so by the angel who brought her the divine message, and by Elisabeth, when, filled with the Holy Ghost, she confessed and adored the Word Incarnate: nay, Mary herself, the next moment, in her prophetic song of thanksgiving, declares, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

When we praise the sun in the heavens for light and warmth he sheds on every living thing around us, and bless the moon when she rises at the dark midnight hour, to enable us to see our way through forest or wold, do we forget that the moon but reflects the beams of the absent sun, or that the sun himself is but the glorious creature of Him from whom alone comes every perfect gift?

XXII.

The Woman of Samaria.

NO spot in all Palestine was dearer to the Hebrew heart, at least during the early period of the national life, than Sichem (Shechem) and its lovely vale. Abraham and Sara first encamped there, and built an altar to Jehovah amid the oak-trees that covered the plain and the hillsides. Jacob purchased the field thus consecrated, dug a well for his numerous family and flocks, and bequeathed both, as a special inheritance, to Joseph; for there Joseph was sold into bondage by his brothers, and there his remains were afterward buried with solemn pomp by Josue. On the very shoulder of Mount Garizim, on which stood one-half of the people when they swore perpetual fidelity to their God, is situated the modern Nablous, which has succeeded to the populous Sichem of the New Testament. The place was revered as the cradle of the nation. At Sichem, Roboam was crowned king; and there, too, the ten tribes withdrew their allegiance from him and his father's house. Beneath the oaks of Sichem, Jacob buried the idolatrous images and amulets that his wives had stolen from Laban. It was an evil seed, planted in hallowed soil, and fated to bear, in after years, a fruitful and lasting crop of religious and political divisions. The neighboring Samaria became the capital of the northern kingdom, giving its name to Sichem and the entire territory of the schismatical tribes. When these were swept into captivity by Shalmanezer, they were replaced by a Babylonian colony, which intermarried with the remaining natives,

and formed a population as mixed in religious belief as in blood, and ever ready to adopt the gods of their foreign masters. They played a most treacherous part during the Maccabean struggle, aiding Antiochus to crush the Jewish faith and nationality. Hence the irreconcilable hatred with which the Jews justly regarded all that bore the name of Samaritan.

To the historical Sichem, situated, as it was, on the great highway between Judæa and Galilee, our Lord was led in the first year of his public ministry, and a few weeks after the celebration of Easter and the conversation with Nicodemus.

It was in May. The barley-harvest was over, and there were "four months" before the wheat-harvest. Thus our Lord and his disciples had to pass through the garden of Palestine at its loveliest season. What this still enchanting vale must have been at that time, we may only conjecture from the enthusiastic praise of ancient writers, and even of Mohammed himself, who affirms "the mountain of Nablous" to be the one spot in Palestine most beloved of Allah. The rich bottom-lands abound in springs of the purest water; and the modern city nestles at the foot of Mount Garizim, embowered in shady groves and orchards filled with the sweetest songsters. The eastern suburb, in our Lord's time, extended nearly a mile along the plain toward Jacob's Well, which at present stands isolated amid a few scattered fragments of ruin. It is called by the Mohammedans, Bir-el-Yakoub, and, by the Christians, Bir-es-Samariyeh. The capacious shelter once provided for travelers, and the troughs for watering the flocks, have now disappeared. Under the Christian kings of Jerusalem, a chapel stood near by, and the well was covered over with a vaulted chamber. The vault has been allowed to fall in, and partly fill up the deep shaft.

To this spot, in the calm and sultry eventide, our Lord and his companions had come after a long day's journey; and, while they went to the neighboring town to buy bread for their sober meal, he, conscious of the approaching occasion of sowing the good seed in that schismatic soil, sat near the well. The soul that he wished to reclaim, and convert into a docile instrument of grace to others, came to draw water. Her known antece-

dents may account for her coming alone and so far to this solitary spring, while others were nearer the city and more convenient. The life she had led, and was still leading, may have made her loath to face the sneers or the repulse of her townswomen.

Sprung from the half-heathen race of the Samaria country, and brought up with lax notions of morality, and amid corrupting examples; endowed, too, with the ardent temperament of her people, and with attractive graces of person, — she had been early married, and soon put away by her husband. The conversation with our Lord proves her to have been open, frank, and generous; one whose warm and trusting heart could easily be revolted by injustice or neglect, and as easily won by kindness; and in the society of Sichem, when the heart's first trust had been betrayed, and the idols set up by the purest and earliest affections had been rudely shattered, the whole future lay open to despair and reckless enjoyment. Such, we are justified in believing, was the woman now approaching the Good Shepherd.

"Jesus saith to her, Give me to drink. . . . Then that Samaritan woman saith to him, How dost thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman? For the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, If thou didst know the gift of God, and who he is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him; and he would have given thee living water."

There is not one passage in the Old or New Testament more pregnant with richest instruction than this. And if the gentle reader, — mother or daughter, — whose eye rests on this page, will give but a few moments of earnest attention to the finding-out its true sense, she will be rewarded with a clear knowledge of vital truth, as refreshing and reviving as the cool waters of the spring to the faint and belated pilgrim.

The "gift of God" is a denomination applied in its highest sense to the Holy Ghost, whose characteristic quality is that from all eternity he was "fitted to be given" (*donabile*) to the adopted children of God, as the first principle of their spiritual union with Christ. Hence, wherever a soul receives sanctifying

grace, and with it the supernatural and divine life that makes her acceptable to God, the Holy Ghost becomes in her the very principle of her new existence, the light of her mind, and the active energy in her will corresponding to that light; so that, in this supernatural state, that Creator Spirit becomes the very soul of that soul, enlightening it, and prompting it to the accomplishment of all godlike deeds, while respecting and preserving, in its inviolable integrity, the soul's inborn freedom of determination and action.

When to the soul, in the full exercise of her reason and faculties, light is communicated, making known that spiritual world in which God is Father, and Christ Saviour and King, and the corresponding impulse is given by the Spirit to the heart, to believe in that Father and Saviour, and to accept his salvation, with the sonship that he offers, and membership in his kingdom; and when the vital acts of the soul — faith and sorrow and hope and love — have been put forth in answer to the touch of the divine power; — then, by the permanent relation established between the Creator and the creature, between the soul regenerated and the Spirit, between man become the adopted child of the Father and his Son Jesus, in whose blood we receive adoption, — there is opened in the soul's inmost depths a fountain of new life, that it depends on our own generous fidelity to render unfailing and eternal.

The woman's curiosity is excited; but her soul, darkened by a life of sensual enjoyment, has never yet had a glimpse of the unseen world that Christ is going to reveal gradually to her. "The woman saith to him, Sir, thou hast nothing wherein to draw, and the well is deep: from whence, then, hast thou the living water? . . . Jesus answered and said to her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever. But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting."

The gravity of the man, the tones of his voice, and the secret yearning created by his discourse within the poor sensualist's breast, prepare the way for further grace. She wishes to possess

showed his secret life to be in contradiction with his public doctrine.

"And one of the Pharisees desired him to eat with him. And he went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down to eat." The invitation, probably, was given either at Naïm or in Capharnaum, most likely in the latter city, to which our Lord returned daily while preaching in the near neighborhood.

In that day and clime, the most hospitable entertained with simplicity. Intellectual conversation was then, and is still, among the best classes of Eastern society, the great charm of the choicest banquet. While Simon and his brother Pharisees plied their Divine Guest with questions, and while the disciples, divided between fear and curiosity, were listening to the answers, every word of which was adapted to the intelligence of a child, lo! the eyes of all were riveted on a veiled figure that had glided into the room unbidden. "Behold, a woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that he sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment; and, standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

It is this extraordinary circumstance of "wiping the feet with her hair," mentioned twice by St. John, in two successive chapters, in connection with Mary of Bethany, that has been relied on for identifying her with Mary the penitent, or Mary Magdalene. But let our attention not be turned away by any such consideration from the touching spectacle before us.

When or how the woman kneeling at these blessed feet had been recalled from her evil ways, remains still a mystery, as well as the specific nature of her guilt. Elsewhere, indeed, it is said that she had been freed from the tyranny of "seven devils;" but these words are understood as applying merely to some aggravated form of demoniacal possession. Closely following on the resurrection of the widow's son, and the miracles performed in presence of the disciples of John the Baptist, this anointing of our Lord would imply that the cure of this woman happened just before the banquet, and probably at the same time as the many

miracles performed to convince the Baptist's messengers. This supposition is also confirmed by the fact that her cure and consequent change of life were such recent occurrences that they were unknown in the city itself to people so watchful and observant as the Pharisees. As to the nature of her guilt, and the circumstances that led to her liberation from her tormentors, let us not attempt to raise the veil that the Incarnate Mercy threw over it. It was a censorious age in Judæa, when the violation of mere formalities was taught to be deadly sin. But it is characteristic of the infinite reverence with which God treats even his deeply sinning children, that he will surround with inviolable secrecy the steps by which they lay bare their souls to him, and the sweet process by which he removes their burthen of guilt. Oh, how different is the human judge from the divine!

"And the Pharisee who had invited him, seeing it, spoke within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, — that she is a sinner." There is the false estimate of the sinner and the sin, as compared with the estimate of the eternal justice. The sin, God hates with an infinite and irreconcilable hatred; but the sinner, the sinful soul, God loves infinitely. The soul of the sinner at Christ's feet had cost the Pharisee nothing: therefore could he revile her. But Jesus was her Creator and Redeemer; and he cast around her the shield of his infinite tenderness and infinite respect.

"And Jesus, answering, said to him, I have somewhat to say to thee. But he said, Master, say it. A certain creditor had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And, whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which, therefore, of the two loveth him most? Simon, answering, said: I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said to him: Thou hast judged rightly. And, turning to the woman, he said unto Simon: Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house; thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she with tears hath washed my feet, and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil

thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed my feet. Wherefore I say to thee, Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But, to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less."

One is justified, on looking closely into our Lord's words, in thinking that the poor demoniac, since her liberation, had not had an opportunity of hearing from his lips that the guilt which had caused her to fall into such fearful thralldom had been taken away with the yoke itself. She had come among the crowd of diseased and possessed, and had been, with them, cured by a word from the Master. And then, with the grace vouchsafed her, came light to see the inveterate wounds of her soul; and she could find no rest till she had poured her tears, and laid down her heavy load of guilt, at those blessed feet. What matter to her, that she has to seek him in the house of his enemies, and to draw on herself their scornful looks and bitter words? She only feels the imperious need of pouring out her whole heart in mute but most eloquent acknowledgment of his goodness, and of her gratitude, her guilt, and her grief, — the need of hearing the word of pardon from these lips divine. "And he said to her: Thy sins are forgiven thee." The spiritual pride of his censors will permit them neither to appreciate the nature of mercy, nor to acquiesce in the facility with which it is extended to a notorious sinner, though seeking to atone for her offenses by the most public confession and humiliation. Simon and his brother Pharisees had not been exposed to the ordeal of temptation, whatever it was, in which that poor soul's innocence had been shipwrecked: it was God's loving providence, that they had been preserved from the trial and its consequences. Theirs was, at best, a negative purity; and it was sullied by self-gratulation, and contempt of others. They could not understand either how godlike a thing it is to raise up and restore the fallen soul, or how divine it is for the sinner to repent, and to repair the past. There was no provision, in their theology, for the canonization of a sinner. "And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves: Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman: Thy faith hath made thee safe: go in peace."

She is gone. In return for her alabaster vase of precious ointment, broken at the feet of Jesus, and of its contents poured out on them, she bears back to her home a heart purified from every stain, made whole by the invisible touch of the Repairer's hand, and filled with a faith and a love whose fragrance shall fill the entire earth. The deep peace that accompanies restored innocence will increase a hundred-fold her efficiency in the service of God and his poor, to which she devotes thenceforward all she is and all she has.

"And it came to pass afterwards, that he traveled through the cities and towns, preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God; and the twelve with him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, — Mary, who is called Magdalene, out of whom seven devils were gone forth; and Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward; and Susanna, and many others who ministered unto him of their substance." Of Susanna there is no further mention made in the Gospel; Joanna's name occurs in connection with the resurrection of our Lord. That they were both ladies of rank and wealth, is indicated clearly enough; while Mary Magdalene's being associated with them, and named in the first place, would prove satisfactorily that she was not their inferior in worldly position. All three are given as representatives of a class of women indebted to our Lord for health of soul and body, and banded together for the one common purpose of providing himself and the Twelve with the necessary means of subsistence during their arduous missionary labors, and of aiding them in the spiritual and bodily care of the poorer converts. The close companionship of Magdalene with Salome and her sister did not begin at Jerusalem, and during the scenes of our Lord's passion: it must have begun in Galilee, at Magdala and Bethsaida, as well as at Capharnaum. There, too, she and the other wealthy converts, "who ministered" to our Lord, had frequent intercourse with his Blessed Mother. The indignation with which some writers reject the notion of Mary Magdalene's being the same person as "the sinner," or as Mary of Bethany, is founded on the assumption that the idea is degrading to the stainless purity of our Lord's mother and relatives, and to the respect-

ability of the family of Lazarus. As if He had not come to seek and to raise up sinners! As if his Blessed Mother could look upon those on whom he had conferred the first benefits of his redeeming and sanctifying grace, as unworthy of her companionship! Not a little of the Pharisaic contemptuousness of Simon and his friends often mixes with our own judgments. Besides, as Joanna, whose husband held a conspicuous position in the court of Herod Antipas, would be naturally zealous in leavening the worldly-minded men and women around her with the knowledge and love of her Benefactor, even so Mary Magdalene would endeavor to win to him the souls of the poor on whom her alms were daily bestowed.

The two years of almost uninterrupted labor spent by our Lord in evangelizing Galilee produced but scanty results. A few thousands at most, from a population of three millions, believed in him when the end came; and before the end many of these "walked no more with him." It was a sad trial for that heart so devoted to his own countrymen, and so anxious to make of them a nation of apostles, through whom he should convert the world. He knew, however, that his Twelve, and the noble band of men and women who clung to him to the last, would suffice, one day, for the mighty achievement. Still he mourned over the obduracy and blindness of the multitudes before whom he had displayed daily the miracles of his power and the treasures of his supernatural wisdom. His consolation was in witnessing the devotion of his few earnest followers. And it is not a little remarkable, that the reproach addressed so often to the apostles, of not understanding clearly, or believing firmly and implicitly, is never applied by him to the women. Is it that a womanly heart is quicker in divining truths that lie hidden beneath the surface, and less divided in its fidelity to convictions once acquired? Or did the Mother, who had studied his every act and word and look during thirty years, and had laid up all these things "in her heart," exercise over the disciples of her own sex an influence that made them more steadfast in their faith and more unselfish in their devotion?

It is certain at least, that, when the predestined hour came for

consummating the great atoning sacrifice, no figure, after the Blessed Mother and St. John, was more prominent, near the cross, than Mary Magdalene. The Christian mind and heart have loved thus to contemplate, beneath the shadow of that dread altar, spotless innocence and virginity associated with hallowed repentance, as symbolical of the fruits of that grace that was poured out on all humanity. Innocence is the prerogative of the few: heroic repentance is the privilege of the many. Of these, Mary Magdalene has ever been considered the model; and thus the heroism of a penitent becomes a sure beacon for the multitude who believe in Christ, and follow him in life and death.

She and Mary, the wife of Cleophas, are mentioned as having remained with Joseph of Arimathea, to superintend the burial of our Lord. Salome had most probably retired with St. John and the Blessed Mother, after they had seen the sacred body taken down from the cross. Joseph went boldly to Pilate, and begged to be allowed to pay the last sad rites to Him whom he openly proclaimed to be his Master. Meanwhile the two Marys, with the other Galilean women, probably, kept watch near the foot of the cross. The multitude had passed away before sunset and the beginning of that most solemn sabbath; the Roman soldiers left on guard, if any, stood aloof; and the heroines were left free to commune in silence with the august dead.

With Joseph of Arimathea, on his return from the governor's, came Nicodemus, now no longer timid and shrinking; Joseph having purchased the finest linen in which to shroud his Master's remains, and Nicodemus "bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound" [weight]. It was the invariable Hebrew custom that men should prepare for burial the bodies of men, and women those of women. Joseph and Nicodemus "took therefore the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the manner of Jews is to bury. Now, there was, in the place where he was crucified, a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein no man yet had been laid. There therefore . . . they laid Jesus, because the sepulcher was nigh at hand." It was done hurriedly, in order to avoid giving useless offense by intruding on the sacred repose of the sabbath already begun.

He who had come in our flesh, to accomplish a work more laborious than the first creation, had completed his task, and was laid to his rest. A great stone, as is the custom in the East, was rolled, probably on hinges, so as to close the entrance to the tomb. Presently a Jewish guard will come, headed by the watchful Pharisees, to seal the stone, and make sure that Christ's disciples shall not take the body away. They deem it no desecration of the sabbath to intrude their odious suspicions and precautions on the grief of the few mourners remaining near that solitary tomb. Alas! there were but two weeping figures there, — the two Marys, "sitting over against the sepulcher."

There they watched, far into the night it may be, while the great city beneath slumbered and dreamed, and the spirits, let loose from the unseen world during the earthquake of the preceding noontide, haunted the sleepers, and terrified them with visions of the coming judgment. It is not likely that the impatient watchers ventured to trespass on the repose of the ensuing feast, and to visit the sepulcher during the day; but, as soon as the sabbath sun had set, they provided themselves with "sweet spices," and prepared, with the early dawn, to anoint the sacred body more carefully. It may have been the prompting of deep reverence for the dead, even had they fully believed in his speedy resurrection: even were he only to be in the grave three days, this partial embalmment would ward off the first approach of corruption. But it is more likely that their minds did not contemplate the mighty event just about to take place. At any rate, the faithful watchers rested but little between sunset and sunrise: they were on their way while the stars were still shining above Calvary, and were doubtless delayed by their anxiety to secure the means of discharging, to their heart's content, their duty toward the dead, as well as by the necessity of taking the most unfrequented roads to the garden. Their concern chiefly was to perform their pious task at the time when they were least liable to interruption. They were not afraid of any violence that might be offered them by his enemies; they had braved executioners, soldiers, and populace, when danger was most to be apprehended: now they only sought the solace of penetrating unseen into the sepulchral

chamber; of placing the precious spices, with their own hands, over the mangled remains of their Lord and Master; and of kissing once more, in death, the pierced hands and feet.

It would appear that while Salome with her sister Mary, and Joanna, were advancing in one direction, Mary Magdalene either went to the sepulcher by another road, or far outstripped her companions in her eagerness to find her Benefactor. Hers is the superior love; not perfected as yet, indeed, by the Pentecostal grace of the Holy Ghost, but a superior and a supernatural love nevertheless. She had never quitted his Mother's side during the dreadful day of his crucifixion, fully expecting, it may be, to die with him, and more than half willing to suffer the utmost with him and for him.

There were no guards at the door of the sepulchral chamber when, first of all human beings, she arrived there "early, when it was yet dark, . . . and she saw the stone taken away from the sepulcher. She ran, therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith to them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him." This is her great grief: they have taken her soul's treasure away, and she knows not where to find him. While the two apostles ran in breathless haste to the spot, she followed as swiftly as she might. They found the tomb empty, and "therefore departed again to their own home. But Mary stood at the sepulcher without, weeping. Now, as she was weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher; and she saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." She is so intent upon the one object, — the eyes of soul and body are fixed with so absorbed a gaze upon the narrow, rocky bed where she had beheld him so reverently placed, and which she sees empty before her, — that she does not bestow a momentary glance or thought upon the angelic guardians of that sanctuary. Even when they address her, she can not take her eyes from the empty tomb.

"When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing; and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, thinking it was the gardener, saith to him, Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." In her utter absorption, she does not look up to scan the features of the new personage she encounters; nor does he reveal himself, either in his wonted garb, or in the splendor of his new condition. Surely He who is the author of all that is purest and best in our nature can not help being pleased with its yearnings, though but unenlightened and most imperfect, when he is their sole object. "Jesus saith to her, Mary!" It is but one word, uttered in the tone remembered so well; and "she, turning, saith to him, Rabboni!" Oh, my Master! In one word, also, her whole heart vents itself. She has found him: she will now cling for ever to these blessed feet, and casts herself at them. But his voice restrains that love founded on a faith not sufficiently enlightened, and a hope that does not rise beyond the present. Her impulse came from an affection mingled with the fear of again losing her treasure. But in restraining and correcting it the Master consoles her: "Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father." My feet have not yet quitted the earth: I must tarry with you yet a while. "But go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God." Such is the account given by St. John, who had so privileged a share in the first favors of that auspicious day. But the still greater favor bestowed on "the sinner," the penitent, is recorded by St. Mark, for the consolation and instruction of every future age: "He, rising early, . . . appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. She went and told them that had been with him, who were mourning and weeping; and they, hearing that he was alive, and had been seen by her, did not believe."

So it is a woman, a sinner, a penitent, one formerly possessed by seven devils, who is here sent by our Lord, at the very hour of his rising from the dead, to bear the message and gospel of his resurrection to the apostles and disciples!

The other three women are also gladdened by the sight of their adored Master; and so shall be presently rewarded every individual in that tried Galilean company of followers. They all shall behold the Conqueror of death and hell, see the mighty hands that had been nailed to the tree, contemplate the countenance radiant with immortal beauty, hear the accents of that loved voice, and fall down to worship at those pierced feet that are yet to tread once more the shores and the waters of Gennesareth. "Going quickly," — such is the angel's command to Salome and her mates, — "tell ye his disciples that he is risen: and, behold, he will go before you into Galilee; there shall you see him." Like him, they will tarry at Jerusalem till the paschal week is ended, and till all who believe in him, even the hesitating Thomas, have been privileged to greet and adore him together. Then, with his Mother and Magdalene, the heroic female band shall turn their faces homeward.

It is again the time of barley-harvest among the hills and lowlands of Judæa. The southern springtide has clad the earth with life and beauty: it is the season of Nature's resurrection. The air is impregnated with perfume; every grove and garden is filled with song as they pass through the Vale of Sichem with steps as light as the breezes that fan its flowers. But brighter than all the splendors of earth and sky, and sweeter than the fragrance of citron-groves or the songs of all Nature's choristers, is the springtide of joy and gratitude and exultation that gladdens their souls. Christ, their Hope, is arisen. He hath gone before them to Galilee; and there they shall surely see him.

XXVI.

Martha and Mary.

ETHANY, the home of these two sisters and of their brother Lazarus, was to our Lord a favorite resting-place, and the scene of the most striking miracle recorded in the Gospel. The wealthy family so dear to him probably owned other estates elsewhere, especially in Galilee; and in these may have occurred some of the incidents connected with this and the last chapter. The sisters are first named together by St. Luke in his tenth chapter, whereas the touching incident of the penitent of Naïm is narrated much earlier in his Gospel. The fact of the evangelist's not identifying the latter, by a single word, with the sister of Martha, is the most peremptory argument against their being one and the same person. This, however, need not trouble our faith, or mar our enjoyment of the divine lessons taught us in the pages of the last two Gospels, in relation to the family of Lazarus.

Our Lord apparently was on his way to the feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem, the summer before his death, when he knocked, with his apostles, at the door of the hospitable and devoted ladies in Bethany. It is situated less than two miles to the east of Jerusalem, on the slope of Mount Olivet, and near the point where the road from Jerusalem to Jericho suddenly descends toward the valley of the Jordan. Every place in the neighborhood is intimately associated with the doings and sayings of the Master. At the present time it is but a wretched hamlet, occupied by about twenty families, and called by the Arabs El-Azarîjeh; the "castle of Lazarus" being still pointed out as the most prominent object

among the surrounding ruins, and his tomb shown in a deep vault near at hand. Bethany must be seen in the early springtide, when olives, almonds, and pomegranates are in bloom, and the oaks and carobs in full leaf, to form some idea of what its loveliness was in our Lord's time, and before desolation fell like a funeral pall upon the entire region around. Even now, when every thing is green, the nook in which it nestles on the mountain side is said to offer a sweet picture of repose and seclusion, — just such a spot as the Master would choose for retirement, after his laborious days of teaching and contention in the neighboring capital. On his way from Jericho, then, and when the very road over which he journeyed had suggested to him the exquisitely beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan, "he entered into a certain town; and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who, sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word. But Martha was busy about much serving." While the whole house is astir to give a fitting welcome to our Lord and his companions, he, as usual, turns every moment to account in sowing and cultivating the seeds of holiness. Whether surrounded by the multitude in the open air, or by the chosen few in his rare moments of privacy, that unwearied heart of his ceased not to pour forth its graces in lessons that held the willing soul entranced. Mary, from the moment he had passed the threshold of her home, forgot all the world beside, to sit at his feet, and listen, and drink in every word and tone. Martha, meanwhile, was untiring in what might be deemed the cares of an over-anxious hospitality. Let us not blame, however, where praise is due. For, in following the natural bent of an active and kindly nature, she was displaying it toward the worthiest of all objects, — Him whom she welcomed as the Messiah, and worshiped as the Son of God. It was a duty into which she threw her whole soul, a service into which she would press her entire household. Though she found willing hands in all beneath her, their united efforts did not suffice to prepare the banquet that she would fain make worthy of her guest. She may have cast many a look at the spellbound Mary, sitting motionless near him, or whispered urgent prayers for help, as she again and again

entered the presence where the apostles and others were also charmed listeners. Then comes the frank-hearted woman's open appeal to the Teacher himself: "Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me;" and his memorable reply, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." The preparation of varied and abundant fare for the Lord and his companions, the setting forth the table, and decking the banqueting-hall as befitted the rank of the hosts and the divinity of the Guest, the care of inviting to meet him none but such as might do honor to the occasion, and be spiritually benefited by the entertainment, — such and many more thoughts filled the mind of Martha. She is not reproved for the "many things," or the "troubled" zeal with which she pursues them for his sake; but he contrasts this multiplicity and anxiety with the "one thing necessary," — the learning Jesus Christ perfectly, and the imitating him faithfully. Natural activity is in itself most praiseworthy, when directed toward its legitimate objects, and restrained within proper limits; and He who planted in the soul its own wholesome inclinations sustains them evermore in their exercise. But the disciples of Christ must rise above mere natural excellence, and aspire to be his close followers in all the godlike virtues of moral perfection. This is the "one thing necessary" to all: to study Christ, to know him, to express him in their own lives. Without this there is no salvation. But in the many degrees of Christian perfection, though all are good, and many excellent, there is one "best," — to renounce all things, and follow him in the royal road of the cross, living as he lived, and dying as he died, poor, forsaken, cursed, and crucified. This is the sublime lot of the few, men or women, and to which they must be specially called: it was that of Mary Magdalene. Was she, then, the Mary who sat at his feet in Bethany, and stood near him on Calvary? Certainly such was "the best part," reserved to the penitent: to what higher privilege could the innocent and the pure aspire?

Lazarus, the natural head of the family, does not appear in this

our introduction to his home. He is only mentioned by St. John, "the beloved disciple" and the historian of Christ's intimate life. It is possible that the youth of her brother left Martha the government of the family. At any rate, Lazarus was possessed of such rare qualities as made him very dear to our Lord and his disciples. The circumstances of their intercourse with him are only hinted at in the words, "Lazarus our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep," uttered by the Divine Master in Bethabara, or Bethany, beyond the Jordan (John x. 40; xi.). This was the place where he had been baptized, and where he spent the last laborious weeks preceding his passion. He wished thereby to bear witness to his forerunner on the very spot where the latter had proclaimed him to be the Son of God. There a message came from the sisters, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. And Jesus, hearing it, said to them [the apostles], This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God; that the Son of God may be glorified by it. Now, Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he still remained in the same place two days." Here is a prayer laid before him, in the simplest and most touching form, by persons who possessed his affection, and in favor of one whom he loved, — a friend both to himself and his disciples, and who is now at death's door. To this appeal in urgent need, from those who are most dear to him, our Lord returns no immediate answer. Two entire days are spent at Bethabara, in ministering to the spiritual needs of the multitude who still flock to hear him; but his friends in Bethany watch in vain, through the weary hours, for his coming. Vainly Lazarus struggles with hope against hope, as the shadows of death fall thicker around him. None of the messengers despatched on the roads that lead to the Jordan bring back tidings of the Healer's approach; and vainly the tears of the desolate sisters flow faster and faster, as time passes, and they see the dread change rapidly wrought in their loved one.

Was it not unkind? No. In this, as in other instances already enumerated, the refusal to comply immediately with the most respectful and urgent petition does not argue a want of love to

the petitioners, or a disregard of their prayer. But the Master, whose word and act and very silence are intended alike for our instruction, will have us understand that he is the Lord, the all-powerful, all-loving, and all-wise; and that we must leave it to him to answer us when and as it seems best to himself. When he apparently rebuked his mother at Cana, and repelled his nearest relatives near Capharnaum, he knew his own purpose, and would have them believe in his power and love, — and wait. So here, he will not tear himself away from the many who are around him, and who have come from afar, to satisfy the demand of private friendship. They believe in his divinity, these loved ones of Bethany: let them hope and wait! To his followers he discloses his ultimate purpose: "This sickness is not unto death."

When the two days were over, and the hospitable mansion of Bethany had become a house of mourning, "he said to his disciples, Let us go into Judæa again." They represent to him that he had but just escaped stoning to death at the hands of the Jews. His reply is, "Lazarus our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." As they could not penetrate his meaning, "Lazarus is dead," he at length exclaims, "and I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, that you may believe; but let us go to him." When they arrived at Bethany, Lazarus "had been four days already in the grave." The house was filled with friends of the family, come from Jerusalem "to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother." They were no friends of the Master: they were Pharisees, but still believers in a future resurrection; and their condolence probably was based upon that doctrine. It is not improbable, as well, that, having heard of the sisters' message to Christ, they took advantage of his seeming refusal to come at once to Bethany, to decry both his doctrine and his person; with what effect, we are told in the sequel. "Martha, therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus was come, went to meet him; but Mary sat at home." They had never, perhaps, given up the hope of seeing him, even when their brother lay dead, or when they bore him to the grave, or even during the dark interval that elapsed since their utter desolation. Their neighbors and servants, too, had not ceased to

watch for his coming along the roads that led up from the Jordan. At the first glimpse of the approaching company, from point to point the tidings were flashed to Bethany, the ardent and impulsive Martha rushing down the hillside to meet him, the prayerful and more trustful Mary biding his coming at home, with collected soul, and heart uplifted to God.

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!" Thus the pain of Martha's disappointment vents itself; but forthwith she adds, as she kneels at his feet, "But now, also, I know that, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." The answer is couched in terms to draw forth a more explicit profession of faith: "Thy brother shall rise again." This was merely the formula of Pharisaic belief in the final resurrection; she had heard it again and again during these last sad days; and there is a tone of complaint in her next words: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Every eye in the gathering crowd is fixed on the tearful suppliant, and the majestic figure before her; and every ear is strained to catch the words of this momentous dialogue. "I am the resurrection and the life," sounds like the first note of the last trumpet on that hillside. For the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the traditional "Vale of Judgment," lies beneath; nor is it without its fitness that the judgment-seat of the King of souls should be where his cross was planted, and that the dawn of the eternal day should arise for Adam and his race amid these same hills where our Life arose from his grave. "He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live. . . . Believest thou this?" Her faith does not go further than that he is the expected Redeemer; the mystery of his twofold nature has not yet been revealed to her inner sense. "Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into this world." He insists no further: that imperfect faith will increase with the added light that he is about to vouchsafe. She is gone for her sister; their united prayers may obtain the grace not granted to her single supplication. "She went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Without a moment's delay, Mary hastens forth.

Senior Thesis

The friends in the house, not understanding the purpose of Martha's sudden re-appearance, or of her sister's speedy departure, follow her with words of sympathy. "She goeth to the grave, to weep there," they repeat to each other. But it was to the Lord of Life that she was hurrying, with the mingled emotions of grief and hope and infinite reverence. He was still outside the town; "and, seeing him, she fell down at his feet, and saith to him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Jesus, therefore, when he saw her weeping, and the Jews that were come with her weeping, groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself." The spectacle of human woe ever moved that most true and compassionate heart: how could he resist the sight of a sister's tears, as she poured them at his feet for a brother's life? But the Jews, the bitter and hardened Pharisees, also wept at the sight; and he could not but bethink him of what pity he should soon experience from them. Well might he, so near the close of his race of love and mercy, so near the scene of his own dreadful suffering, with the vision of guilty Jerusalem rising up before him, and of her coming destruction, and with that other vision of the last judgment, incomparably more terrible, darkening his soul, — well might he be troubled, and vent his grief in groans and sobs! It was the Man-God bewailing wayward and lost humanity. But he overcomes his sorrow with a mighty effort, and turns him to the work which is to be the precursor, in that vale, of the final raising of the dead.

"Where have you laid him?" he exclaims. "They say to him, Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him." Ah! if they could only then have opened their eyes to see and know how he loved them! "But some of them said, Could not he that opened the eyes of the man born blind have caused that this man should not die?" It was only increasing the already intolerable agony of the heart that knew and felt all this. "Jesus, therefore, again groaning in himself, cometh to the sepulcher. Now, it was a cave; and a stone was laid over it. Jesus saith, Take away the stone." As they were removing it, the odor of the corpse in putrefaction filled the air; and Martha, who had gone forward to the tomb,

ran back to tell him so, in a burst of despair. "Jesus saith to her, Did not I say to thee, that, if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God? They took, therefore, the stone away. And Jesus, lifting up his eyes, said, Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people who stand about have I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. When he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!" It was indeed the God of nature, whose creating voice echoed throughout that vale of death. "And presently he that had been dead came forth. . . . Many, therefore, of the Jews who were come to Mary and Martha, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in him."

So there was joy once more in the home of Lazarus; and if, as we can scarcely doubt, our Lord tarried there that night, what a lesson he could teach brother and sisters on that dread mystery of the life to come, within whose shadow or light Lazarus had been lately tarrying! The merciful heart was consoled by seeing, at the hospitable board, the new believers won to him by his tears, perhaps, as much as by the display of his divine power. For God is revealed and glorified to our human nature, no less by the exhibition of compassionate tenderness, than by that of his imperial sway over death and hell. His human nature needed and accepted gratefully these rare results of his labor; and they must have proved all the more pleasing then, that during the very next days the resurrection of Lazarus was made the occasion of assembling the grand council of the nation, and of declaring our Lord deserving of death.

As the time fixed by the prophecies for his immolation had not yet arrived, he withdrew into the wild mountain fastnesses overlooking the valley of the Jordan, which had formerly served as a retreat to Elias and the Baptist. His last memorable journey to Jerusalem brought him again to Bethany. There was no longer any motive for concealment; he had come to brave and bear the very worst his enemies could do. Six days before the Passover, a Pharisee, known as Simon the leper, prepared in his house a great feast for the Master. It is thought that Simon had previ-

ously been cured miraculously of the loathsome disease of leprosy; that he was a near relative of Lazarus; and that this banquet was a public testimony of the host's gratitude for the special regard shown to the family, and for the splendid miracles performed in favor of its members. Lazarus was one of the guests, being seated, probably, among the apostles, and near our Lord's person, while Martha testified her reverence by being foremost among those who waited on the table; Mary found means to display her faith and gratitude in a manner peculiarly her own.

This supper at Simon's house may be considered as a farewell banquet to which the most distinguished of our Lord's friends were invited. There were many there who looked upon him and listened to him as to the revered Master whom they should see and hear no more. This was more especially the case with Martha and Mary. No other women are mentioned as having been invited. The elder sister had profited by the admonition given to her, to restrain her excessive activity, and to blend more of the quiet of prayerful contemplation with the performance of her important household duties. She had been growing in the knowledge of divine things, and in the practice of that perfect singleness and purity of purpose that enables the careful soul to live and labor in the presence of the Godhead, as if the veil were removed. This was the lesson she had endeavored, since that memorable night, to learn from Him whose food was to do the will of the Father, and whose eye ever dwelt upon the unclouded Majesty to which he was personally and inseparably united. With what adoring reverence she served, for the last time, at that table, the Light and Guide of her soul, any one may best judge who has ever spread a farewell banquet for the one dearest and most worshiped, on the eve of a lifelong separation.

And Mary? Let St. John, who was present, and dearer even than Lazarus to the Master, describe what the younger sister did. There was no misgiving in her mind with regard to the certainty of the terrible sufferings and death so near at hand: so she had prepared to bestow on her brother's Saviour from death, such a public mark of her soul's love and grief as should be acceptable to him. "Mary, therefore, took a pound of ointment of right

[pure] spikenard, of great price, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." St. Matthew says the precious ointment was in an alabaster box, and that it was poured out on our Lord's head. Mary probably broke the frail vase on his feet, and then poured the remainder on his head, returning to the sacred feet and wiping them with her hair. She was led to do this by a divine instinct. When taken down from the cross, and prepared for burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, his body was to be prepared for burial by them alone; and Nicodemus himself poured on the lacerated and dislocated members the ointments that he had purchased. When Mary Magdalene and her companions went to the sepulcher on the resurrection morning, they found the tomb empty, and had no further use for the spices they had provided. Mary was urged by inspiration to anticipate the performance of a duty that was eventually to be impossible for her. In its fulfillment she manifested her reverence for Christ's humanity by purchasing abundantly of what was most costly and exquisite, by pouring the contents of the vessel upon that divine head whose every thought was devoted to our souls' welfare, and upon those feet that never wearied in seeking, far and near, the stray sheep of God's fold. It was the tribute of wealth, gratitude, deepest reverence, and love for Him who, being God in the flesh, had wasted his life, and was about to endure extreme agony of soul and torture of body, for the salvation of mankind. It was meet that one noble soul, in the name of all the race, should seem to be lavish in her piety, when the God-Man was so unsparing of himself. The aroma of the royal perfume, the produce even to this day of plants growing at the foot of the far-away Himalayas, filled the banqueting-hall.

Who among the friends of the Lord would not praise the generous love that had poured out, without stint, the rarest of essences on the divinest of benefactors? There was one, at least, present, and he an apostle! No soul becomes so narrow as the soul called to the exercise of the highest generosity in a godlike vocation, but therein seeking self instead of God and God's interests: of none is the censure more bitter than of the traitor and the apos-

tate, even in matters where God himself is the direct object of the worshiper's generosity. "Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, he that was about to betray him, said, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? . . . Jesus, therefore, said, Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of my burial. For the poor you have always with you; but me you have not always." St. Mark expresses Christ's rebuke in somewhat more intelligible terms: "She is come beforehand to anoint my body for the burial. Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memorial of her."

From that table, Judas the traitor-apostle went to sell away, for a paltry sum of money, his Master's honor, liberty, and life; but from that same table many arose determined to brave the enmity of the mightiest in the land, rather than deny Him whom they believed to be the Messiah. The hour had come when men had to choose between him and his opponents. "A great multitude, therefore, of the Jews knew that he was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests thought to kill Lazarus also, because many of the Jews, by reason of him, went away and believed in Jesus." Simon and his kinsfolk — such we suppose Lazarus and his sisters to be — had thus a twofold reward for their noble profession of faith in Christ: they saw many, among the multitude who had come to examine into the reality of the mighty miracle performed at Bethany, declare themselves on the spot Christ's followers; and the family themselves were judged worthy of suffering for the Master's sake. This was the seal of their predestination and apostleship. It was a proud day for Lazarus and his sisters. On the morrow they and the new disciples swelled the "great multitude" who met Jesus with palm-branches at the gates of Jerusalem. The terrors of the ensuing days, the unfathomable mystery of his utter helplessness when in the hands of his enemies, and the very extremity of degradation to which he was brought in death, did, doubtless, shake or kill the new-born faith of many; but in the greater number it

sprung up into more vigorous life beneath the sun of the resurrection day, and received its full confirmation in the grace of Pentecost.

Unless we admit the identity of Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany, the family of Lazarus is not mentioned afterward in the New Testament. It was not deemed advisable, when the three first Gospels were written, to concentrate on a family already persecuted, the animosity that at one time resulted in the imprisonment of Peter, the death of James the Elder, and the dispersion of the most prominent disciples. St. John, who wrote his Gospel at a later period, and when the storm had spent its fury, felt himself free to give to the world the touching picture of our Lord's friendship for this most interesting family. Though the decree of death pronounced against Lazarus in the Sanhedrim was not carried into effect, it resulted, ultimately, in the expulsion of the family from Palestine, if we are to believe the most ancient writers and best-founded traditions. The identity of Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene is asserted by Clemens Romanus, by Ammonius Saccas, Origen's master, and Eusebius of Cæsarea, in their Harmonies of the Four Gospels, as well as by Ephrem Syrus, and Epiphanius. This is here stated, not by way of controversy, but for the information of the reader.

In the same spirit we may point to the tradition relating to the banishment from Palestine of Lazarus and his sisters, together with Maximinus, one of "the seventy-two disciples." They landed at Marseilles, then a Grecian colony, where Lazarus and Mary became the apostles of the city and the adjacent territory; Maximinus going to the territory of Aix and Tarascon, where he obtained the co-operation of Martha, who evangelized the women, and founded permanent establishments for the relief of the sick and poor.

XXVII.

The Widow's Mite.

POVERTY, that royal generosity of spirit so dear to Christ, and canonized by him in the person of the nameless widow, may be best understood after a careful examination of the passage recording both her deed and his praise of her. No part of his doctrine is more truly divine than this; for it elevates the love which gives to God its little all, to an equality with the magnificence that dispenses princely wealth with unsparing hand for the holiest purposes: it makes loftiness of soul the standard of all true worth, and assigns the same meed of eternal glory to the lowliest and poorest as to the richest and most exalted in station.

This sublime lesson, so consoling to the heart of the immense majority of the human race, was taught in that part of the temple called the Women's Court, adjoining the Beautiful Gate and the Altar of Burned Offerings. There were placed the treasure-chests, or repositories for the donations made by worshipers, toward the repairs of the sacred edifice and all other expenses attendant on the service of the temple. It was, therefore, popularly designated as the Treasury. The repositories were distributed around the court, and had narrow apertures, or slits, into which the alms were dropped in view of all. This court, as well as Herod's Royal Porch, seems to have been a favorite resort of our Lord whenever he went up to Jerusalem, probably because some spot in it or near it afforded him the means of addressing his instructions to the men on the one side, and the women on the other.

The incident to be presently narrated occurred in the interval between the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and our Lord's apprehension and death. His days were spent in the precincts of the temple, with an occasional brief space of rest on the shady slopes of Mount Olivet; and his nights were passed with his hospitable friends at Bethany. It was the Passover, — his last celebration. The city was thronged with strangers; and the hills around were covered with tents as with the camp of a mighty army; for Josephus informs us, that at this period as many as three millions of Jews came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch. Avoiding, then, the immense southern or Royal Porch, with its three vast aisles filled with a noisy crowd, our Lord sought the comparative quiet of the interior and more sacred area around the great Altar of Holocausts.

It was while conflicting sentiments filled the breasts of those who surrounded Christ, — the scribes and Pharisees, the wondering crowd, the anxious relatives, the loving disciples, — and while the tide of truly pious worshipers ebbed and flowed unceasingly beneath the wide marble porticoes, and through the glittering gates, that our Lord "sat over against the treasury," on some of the steps leading from one court to another, and "beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much." It shall ever be said, to the praise of the mass of that much tried but favored nation, that their zeal for all that contributed to the decoration and repairs of the temple, and the splendor of public worship, could be damped by no accident of fortune or distance.

"And there came a certain poor widow; and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And, calling his disciples together, he saith to them, Amen, I say to you this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury; for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she, of her want, cast in all she had, *even* her whole living." The Master is so deeply moved at the sight of this poor woman's generosity, that he does not address his remarks to the promiscuous multitude, on whom so many of his most beautiful lessons were thrown away, like rain-clouds from the Pacific pouring their treasures on the Colorado

desert. He rises from his place of observation, and collects his apostles and disciples around him, that he may deposit in faithful hearts the pregnant truth of his lesson.

Who was the poor widow? and whence came she? He whose heart is the great Book of Life can reveal it on the last day. Assuredly among those who deposited willingly and lovingly their offerings in the treasury that day, we can imagine many, very many, who gave largely from out the wealth acquired by lifelong industry among privations and sufferings. Of such as gave through ostentation, though never so liberally, we say nothing: it was an oblation to self, which could have no blessing. But the poor widow? — perhaps she was like so many beautiful and heroic souls, unknown or forgotten of men among the vast mass of the wretched, to be found in all great populous centers. How often does one meet in the crowded thoroughfare with the wasted forms of true womanhood, vainly trying to conceal beneath the neat but threadbare garment inborn grace and extreme indigence! But it is within the poor walls that shelter such mothers and their offspring that one should go in order to find what untold treasures of goodness, of heroism, of holiness, may lie there, unknown to all save God and his angels. It was such a widow, a mother, a heroine, that entered that day with the eager crowd that came to worship in the temple. Alas! she could not afford to purchase any of the costly victims whose blood ceased not to flow on the pavement and to mingle beneath with the red stream ever borne onward to the purifying waters of Siloam. The sweet resignation with which she accepted her lot, the grateful sense of God's protection amid all her ills, her devout thanks for the priceless blessings of her children's love, and her own fortitude, went up to heaven from her tried and pure heart, more acceptable than the smoke of incense or the fumes of holocaust. And it needed no angel's ministry to apprise the Master of her presence and her prayer. He had just ended his denunciation of the hypocritical greed of the scribes and Pharisees, who were wont to make religion an intolerable burthen to the poor, and to "devour the houses of widows under pretense of long prayer." He had taken his seat "over against

the treasury," when the modest and timid creature stealthily deposited her "two mites," — all she had in the world, her only means of purchasing bread for that night's meal. Among the crowd who looked on, many were doubtless curious enough to watch the wealthy strangers pouring in to the treasure-chests their offerings of gold, or presenting to the proper officers rare stuffs, or spices, or vessels of beautiful workmanship. This exhibition of generous and genuine piety was in itself, at the approach of the Passover, a proud sight for a true Israelite. The Master, far from depreciating such generosity, praised it to his disciples: but "this poor widow hath cast in more than all they." She gave "of her want;" they, "of their abundance:" she laid at God's feet "all she had, *even* her whole living;" they, perhaps not a ten-thousandth part of their fortune.

Herod the Great "for forty and six years" had not ceased to restore, embellish, and enlarge the temple itself, and the gorgeous structures that surrounded it, till it vied in grandeur and beauty with the temple-palaces of the Egyptian Thebes. Others among the wealthiest of the Hebrew race at home and abroad honored themselves and their faith by contributing to the beauty of God's house, and the splendor of his worship: but of all these no special commendation is made by the Master, and of their works not a stone remains; while "the widow's mite" is recorded in the affectionate remembrance of every Christian household, and serves to stimulate true piety not merely in the performance of deeds of outward beneficence, but in building up, in secret, personal sanctity, by silent and heroic endurance, and in helping needy souls to the knowledge and love of the living God.

XXVIII.

Women of the Apostolic Church.

WHAT is said in all the four Gospels of the generous fidelity of the Galilean women prepares us to find them among the most active propagators of the new faith; but we are disappointed, as we read the other books of the New Testament, to discover so few details regarding the share that women unquestionably had in promoting the rapid and solid success of the apostles' labors. Still, on a closer perusal, enough is found to make up a most attractive picture of early female devotion to the cause of Christ, and of fruitful zeal in advocating it. Among thousands of unrecorded names of these first of Christian heroines, a few, at least, have come down to us, that deserve to be forever cherished as the parents, in the measure of their own womanly possibilities, of the churches of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Four are especially deserving of mention here.

1. The first of these, in the order of time, is Mary, sister of the apostle Joseph or Joses (better known by his surname of Barnabas, "the son of consolation"), and the mother of John-Mark, associated with Barnabas and Paul in their first missionary labors. She appears to have been wealthy; for the Acts of the Apostles assign to her the privilege of giving hospitality to Peter, and of devoting her house to the religious assemblies of the church of Jerusalem. The earliest and most credible traditions complete in this particular the scanty but very suggestive information contained in the Acts. They say that in her house was "the upper chamber" in which Christ celebrated the Last Supper, and

to which the apostles and disciples retired on coming back to Jerusalem after the ascension; that there it was they continued "with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren (relatives);" there Matthias was elected to fill the place of Judas; and there, on the Day of Pentecost, they received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Certainly it was to Mary's house that Peter repaired when he was miraculously liberated from prison by the angel. It is this intimacy with a family so devoted to our Lord, that inspired Peter with such a fatherly affection for John-Mark, that he speaks of him as "Mark, my son" (1 Pet. v. 13). We can thus, without departing from the truth of history, adopt an opinion which enables us to group together, around Mary's home as a center, the most thrilling events connected with the birth of Christianity in Jerusalem. Of the woman herself, her personal character and disposition, we can only form conjectures based on the munificent use to which she put her dwelling, the prominent part taken by her brother in laying the foundation of the most flourishing churches among the Greeks, and her generous surrender of her son to the labors and dangers of the apostolate. She was, probably, like Barnabas, a native of Cyprus, though of Hebrew parentage, and may have resembled him in majestic presence. Like him, she consecrated her fortune, her son, and herself to the cause of the gospel.

Her house was on Mount Sion, and was replaced at a very early date by a church. This was in a flourishing condition in the fourth century, as attested by Epiphanius and Cyril of Jerusalem, and was visited later by St. Jerome, Arculf, and other pilgrims from the West.

One might think that this Mary had glory enough in being the sister of one apostle, and the mother of one almost an apostle in dignity as he was in deeds; but it is to her own personal virtues, her unbounded generosity, and unshaken fidelity, that she owed the privileged place she held among the early Christians. Her son, whom many early writers confound with the evangelist St. Mark, did not belie the promise of his early apostleship, or the generous nurture received from his parent. He returned once

more to Palestine after the death of Paul, devoted himself to the care of the Phœnician churches, and died bishop of Byblos, his feast being held on Sept. 27 in the ancient martyrologies.

2. On that same lovely Phœnician coast, but farther to the south, at Joppa (the modern Jaffa), which, from the days of Solomon, was considered part of Jerusalem, we are now to admire a second Hebrew woman, whose name has come down to us as the very symbol of active charity to the poor. Tabitha (Gazelle), or Dorcas, as the Greeks called her, was a Christian "full of good works and almsdeeds." She was probably advanced in years, and possessed of independent means, of which she made a noble use, emulating in this, as in the whole tenor of her life, the disinterestedness and devotion of the church in Jerusalem. She was the mother of the poor and distressed in Joppa. This city was the commercial metropolis of Palestine; nor had the patronage bestowed on the neighboring Cæsarea by the Herodian dynasty been able to divert traffic from its ancient highway. As in all busy seaports, there was in Joppa a large class of the needy and infirm, made up of all nationalities, no small proportion of whom were affected with the loathsome forms of Eastern disease. It was their wretched condition that most appealed to the fervent disciples of the Crucified. Dorcas did not spare herself in their service, we may rest assured; and the very excess of her zeal may have brought on the illness that proved fatal in spite of the tears and prayers of the population. "They laid her in an upper chamber," usually the best, and most richly furnished, according to Eastern custom; "and, forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not be slack to come unto them." The apostle was then on a missionary excursion through the Mediterranean provinces. It was a brief season of peace following upon the persecution that had ended with the martyrdom of Stephen. His blood proved the seed of a plentiful crop of conversions, that covered the land with the rapidity of an arctic springtide; and Peter made haste to garner it. At Lydda, amid the proverbially beautiful and fertile tableland of Sharon, he had just met with extraordinary success.

Having cured a man "named Eneas, who had kept his bed for eight years, and who was ill of the palsy," his miracle was the means of converting the mass of the population. The fame of it reached Joppa, only a few miles distant, just as Dorcas died; and the Christians of Joppa hastened to solicit Peter to come to them without delay. "And Peter, rising up, went with them. And, when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood about him, weeping, and showing him the coats and garments which Dorcas made them." No funeral eulogy could be more complete or more eloquent, — the widows' tears, and the garments which their deceased protectress and guide had prepared with her own hands. It was most fit that in favor of such devoted charity should be performed the most stupendous of miracles. The same Divine Spirit that ruled the conduct of Elias at Sarephta, and that of Elisæus at Sunam, now impels Peter to remain alone with God and the dead: even the weeping crowd of the faithful poor are to be excluded from that dread presence. "And, they all being put forth, Peter, kneeling down, prayed; and, turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and, seeing Peter, she sat up. And, giving her his hand, he lifted her up. And, when he had called the saints and the widows, he presented her alive. And it was made known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord."

There is no need here of any fanciful or forced interpretation of this first instance of the raising of the dead to life by the chief apostle. It was the purpose of the Son of God, when he became incarnate, to impart a new life to the Mosaic religion, to develop and to perfect every element of supernatural truth and sanctity which had been intrusted to the Jewish dispensation, to make of the renovated and expanded church born in Judæa and of the Hebrew blood, a divine system destined to embrace all humanity.

By a marvelous coincidence, it was immediately after this miracle, and while Joppa and the whole land were filled with the joy and wonder it occasioned, that Peter had the supernatural vision foreshadowing the necessity of admitting the Gentiles into the fold of Christ.

How much more large-hearted and liberal-handed must not Dorcas have become after having been brought back to life and to the sphere of her former charities, from the very foot of the judgment-seat! What new lights did her soul not receive during its brief sojourn within the confines of eternity? And how could she have come so near to that sun of perfect charity, God's bosom in the beatific vision, without receiving from such near approach an incredible increase of love for souls? It is because our light is so dim, and our view limited by the narrow circle of parish, city, country, and creed, that our aims are so low and our efforts so puny and abortive. Oh, if we could see the interests of immortal souls in the light of God's eternity!

The language of charitable deeds is one that never passes away; the eloquence of a life of self-sacrifice is one suited to all times and places: it is understood by the cannibals of Samoa, as well as by the citizens of Yeddo and Pekin. The secret of Peter's power, and Paul's persuasiveness, lay in the one being inflamed with the love of his Master and his Master's flock, and in the other bearing with him, impressed on his countenance, and stamped on his whole life, the resemblance to the Crucified. Dorcas spent her life in unceasing efforts to benefit the poor, and enlighten the rich. The language of miracles may not be vouchsafed to the ministers of the gospel a century hence, when, in the great cities of Europe and America, the savages that are increasing amid our civilization will have to be taught anew Jesus Christ; but they will believe in every Dorcas that spends her substance and her life in caring for the neglected poor; and they will accept Jesus Christ and him crucified, from all, no matter how infirm of speech, whose lives are the image of their Master's. And — believe it, ye mothers who read this page — it is at your knees, from your lips, and the whole tenor of your conduct, that must be formed a higher race of apostles, molded to a higher self-denial, required by a generation fallen away from the faith through our degeneracy.

3. A special vision had directed to Greece the steps of Paul, who had just been busy in establishing the churches of Galatia, and in confirming in the faith their impulsive and unstable converts. From Troas, where the divine will was manifested to the apostle,

with Silas, Timothy, and Luke, he passed over to Philippi, at that time a large city, and filled with a mixed population of Greeks and Italians. There, too, was a number of Jewish residents, and among them a woman called Lydia, a native of Thyatira, itself a Macedonian colony in Asia Minor. Few women of the apostolic church, so far as we know, did more to assist the cause of Christ. St. Luke, who was himself with St. Paul, describes very vividly their meeting with Lydia, and the founding of the church of Philippi. This city, of which only a few ruins now remain, was situated nine miles from the sea. "And we were in the city some days, conferring together." It was a new world, this mixed colony of Greeks and Romans, of Asiatics and Europeans; but it was only at the north-eastern gate of that Greece whose superior culture, even in her political decay, still swayed, as it has ever charmed, mankind. It was a mart to which were brought, among other products of Oriental industry, the rich dyed stuffs woven in Asia Minor and the Far East, and then as now the favorite vesture of the wild mountain populations of that region. Two worlds with their civilizations met in the crowded markets of Philippi. What hope could the apostles have, of building any thing stable on such a mixture of races that resembled the ever-shifting quicksands at the confluence of two mighty rivers? and how were they to address themselves to this strange people? We can not be therefore surprised at their "conferring together" for some days. "And upon the sabbath day, we went forth without the gate by a river-side, where it seemed that there was prayer; and, sitting down, we spoke to the women that were assembled. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshiped God, did hear, whose heart the Lord opened to attend to those things that were said by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us." She was, then, a proselyte, this great-souled woman, like many, if not all, of those who had gone out of the city on the sabbath morning amid the beautiful scenery, and beneath the calm skies, of that favored climate. The Jewish

exiles whom the persecutions of such men as Antiochus had scattered along the coasts, and among the inland cities of Asia Minor, had converted many from heathenism to a purer faith; and they and these proselytes were like precious seeds deposited here and there on a fertile soil during a long wintry season, and waiting for the springtide rain and warmth. In that assembly of women, that had come far away from the noise and bustle of the city to pray together to the living God on the flowery bank of the stream, Paul found ready to his hand the very best materials for building up a Christian community. Men's souls, exposed and parched and hardened by incessant contact with the busy and striving throng, often afford no place for the saving Word to sink and to grow; or, where it does take root, the soil is not deep, and yields, at best, but a scanty and uncertain growth. Not so with the heart of woman, accustomed to the shade, and kept soft by the affections and sufferings of home-life: the soil there is deep, and retains what it receives, and brings forth abundantly in God's good season.

So one household, at least, declared for Christ in that assemblage; and on the spot where God's grace moved Lydia to believe, in the waters of that stream so lonely now, she and her kinsfolk and dependents were baptized. Thenceforth all she is and all she has belong to the Lord. Her house must become the abode of the apostles, and doubtless, also, the meeting-place of the little community as it grew, the sanctuary where all came to drink deeper every day of the knowledge of Christ and his mysteries, and where they daily celebrated, "in memory of him," that feast of love which is the shadow and the foretaste of the eternal fruition. We find repeated in Philippi the virtues and the persecutions through which the infant Church of Jerusalem waxed strong and increased. The house of Lydia seems a copy of the house of Mary.

It was in Philippi that Paul heard the young priestess, possessed by the spirit of falsehood, testifying to the true God in presence of the deluded multitude: he, therefore, commanded the evil spirit to depart from the girl. Her masters, enraged at the loss of the large profits derived from the exercise of her

skill, seized Paul and Silas, dragged them before the magistrates, roused the entire population against them, had them shamefully stripped and scourged in the public place, and then cast into prison. But at midnight, while the apostles were singing God's praises, the place was shaken by an earthquake, the doors were cast open, and the fetters fell from the prisoners' limbs: they fled not, however. This led to the immediate conversion and baptism of the jailer and his family. "And they went out of prison, and entered into the house of Lydia; and, having seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed." The Philippian Christians were more than once accused, like their apostle, of being disturbers of the public peace, and enemies of the national government and religion; and for this they were made to suffer repeatedly. But Paul did not forget them in their seasons of trouble: beside consoling them by letter, and by sending them his most trusted associates to encourage them in their trials, he visited them twice in person. His last visit was so timed, that he spent among them the whole of Eastertide, writing thence one of his beautiful epistles to the church of Corinth.

Lydia's name occurs in the most ancient martyrologies of the Latin and Greek churches. Her death is commemorated on Aug. 3.

4. A no less illustrious and efficient auxiliary to Paul was found in Prisca, or Priscilla, who, with her husband Aquila, welcomed the apostle to Corinth the year after the foundation of the church of Philippi. Paul had meanwhile preached at Thessalonica, Berœa, and Athens; but the central position of Corinth, and her world-wide fame, made his success there a matter of the utmost importance to the nascent Christianity of Greece. The Corinth of classic story had been annihilated by the Roman consul Mummius a century and a half before the Christian era, all the men being put to death, the women and children sold into slavery, the immense treasures of every description sent to Rome, and the vast and beautiful city consigned to the flames. Thus it remained for a whole century, till colonized by its Roman masters. It had a population of one hundred thousand under the first Cæsars, with a commerce and a prosperity, which, great as

they were in reality, were scarcely a shadow of what they had been when Rome was only in her infancy. Through all its vicissitudes this most beautiful of ancient cities was ever the most profligate. A century after St. Paul, it was visited and minutely described by Pausanias; but even then the foulest idolatry was enthroned in the Acropolis, eighteen hundred feet above the plain; and the road leading down the steep acclivity was lined with temples and statues of the Eastern and Western gods; the city itself being still one magnificent Pantheon, in which, in every street and public place, the objects of heathen worship were triumphantly displayed. In no part of the civilized world did idolatry so long stand its ground against the purifying influence of the Christian faith, so deeply rooted was it in moral corruption. In no place did Paul stand in such need of the sanctifying power of womanly zeal; and he found it in Priscilla and Phœbe, the latter of whom resided in the suburb of Cenchræa, the port of Corinth on the eastern side of the isthmus. Priscilla and her husband Aquila were not of Hebrew descent, but had become Jewish proselytes in Rome, whence they had been expelled, together with all Jews, a short time before the arrival of Paul in Corinth. Stripped, most probably, of all, or a great portion, of his wealth in Rome, Aquila now had to subsist by manual labor. He, as well as Paul, had learned the trade of tent-maker; and this became one cause of their intimacy; for Paul, during his abode with Aquila at Athens, followed his invariable rule of supporting himself and his associates by his own labor, accepting the aid of other people's bounty only when sick, or too much occupied in his ministrations to work at his trade. Thus he did at Thessalonica, whither he went on leaving Philippi; and therefore could he write to them these golden words, . . . "Yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; for we were not disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing, but in labor and in toil we worked night and day, lest we should be chargeable to any of you. . . . For also when we were with you this we declared to you, that, if any man will not work, neither let him eat." Such was the noble independence of the man who came to announce the message of Jesus Christ crucified to Corinth the

proud and the voluptuous. He began by preaching every sabbath in the local synagogue, addressing his arguments both to his own countrymen and to the Greeks. But, when Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia to join him, he increased his exertions to convert the Jews. However, as they only met him by contradiction and abuse, he bestowed his zeal on the Gentiles. One Titus, who lived near the synagogue, joined him with his household, as did Crispus the ruler of the synagogue; "and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized." Among these are mentioned elsewhere the households of Caius, Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who are called "the first-fruits of Achaia." When Chloe and her household, as well as Phœbe, were baptized, is not stated; but they were probably among the first. During eighteen months did the apostle and his companions labor in this rich field, commanded to do so by a direct communication from on high. All this time, the house of Priscilla was their habitual residence; there the believers met for prayer, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and for the practice of all the deeds of brotherly charity that flowed as a consequence from their new convictions and from the needs of great numbers of poor in a large and luxurious city.

Priscilla and her husband followed Paul on his return to Asia. He left them at Ephesus while he went to fulfill at Jerusalem the conditions prescribed by the termination of a Nazarite vow with which he had bound himself. At Ephesus they became acquainted with Apollo, a Jew trained in the schools of Alexandria, "an eloquent man, . . . one mighty in the Scriptures, . . . and . . . fervent in spirit." On his passage through Judæa he had fallen among the disciples of John the Baptist, who taught him what they had heard from their master. Priscilla and Aquila, having heard his powerful exhortations in the Ephesian synagogue, invited him to their house, and "expounded to him the way of the Lord more diligently. And, whereas he was desirous to go to Achaia," his zealous hosts who had inspired him with this desire "wrote to the disciples to receive him." His Greek training, and the thorough discussion of all the systems of Gentile philosophy for which the Alexandrian schools were famous,

providentially fitted him to complete the work begun by Paul in Corinth. His practical knowledge of the difficulties which most puzzled the intellects of Jews and Greeks alike enabled him to address himself to both with equal success. Thus was Priscilla's superior instruction the means not only of aiding the apostles in their labors, but of forming apostles as well. On Paul's return to Ephesus occurred the sedition got up against him by the silversmith Demetrius. Priscilla and her husband exposed their own lives to save the apostle from the fury of the mob, as they probably had done on a similar occasion in Corinth. They followed him even to Rome, when he was taken in chains to that capital to be tried before the emperor. Theirs was not an attachment likely to be weakened by the ill-fortunes of its object. When Paul was set free, it was to their house that he betook himself. Of their position in the Roman church, as well as of the nature and success of their labors there, we can only judge by a few lines in the concluding chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, written from Corinth: "Salute Prisca and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus (who have for my life laid down their own necks; to whom not I only give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles), and the church which is in their house." It is praise awarded to no others. This illustrious pair had evidently been the benefactors of "all the churches of the Gentiles" in Europe and Asia by the edification of their saintly lives much more even than by their liberal charities.

5. The bearer of this same Epistle to the Romans was Phœbe, who had been at Cenchræa what Priscilla had been at Corinth, — the mother of the poor, and the very soul of practical piety. We need only record here St. Paul's praise of her in the letter committed to her trust as he sends her to labor with Priscilla among the outcast millions of imperial Rome: . . . "I commend to you Phœbe our sister, who is in the ministry of the church that is in Cenchræa; that you receive her in the Lord as becometh saints; and that you assist her in whatever business she shall have need of you. For she, also, hath assisted many, and myself, also." Her name, too, is placed on the martyrologies of the Eastern and Western churches, enshrined in the grateful memory

of every successive generation of Christians. Priscilla and Phœbe are venerated by the Greeks of modern Corinth amid the accumulated ruins of four thousand years. What agencies more potent to build a Christian state amid seemingly hopeless decadence than the imitation of virtues like theirs, — unsullied purity, faith invincible in suffering and persecution, and charity that has a heart and a hand ever open to all? At Rome, also, from the ashes of these saintly women, an immortal line of other women has sprung up, devoted to the relief of every form of ill from which the human soul or body can suffer; and so long as the generous spirit of Priscilla and Phœbe burns bright in Roman bosoms, a hope more vital than that attached to the vestal fire shall make the Christian world feel that Rome's empire is eternal.

Heroines of the Christian Church.

Heroines of the Christian Church.

St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr.

St. Monica, Mother of St. Augustine.

St. Brigid, or Bride, of Kildare.

St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland.

St. Elisabeth of Hungary.

St. Teresa (of Spain).

American Saints.

1. Rose of Lima (Peru).
2. Vénérable Marie de l'Incarnation,
   (Marie Guyart-Martin, *Foundress of the Ursulines of Canada*).
3. Vénérable Marguerite Bourgeoys,
   (*Foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame, Montreal*).

XXIX.

Agnes, Virgin and Martyr.

AMONG the army of heroic women who bore witness to Christ by shedding their blood, one shines conspicuously toward the close of the era of persecution, — Agnes, the Roman patrician maiden who was put to death because she preferred a heavenly bridegroom to earthly nuptials. She was of a senatorial family, and the destined heir of immense wealth. This, added to her extraordinary beauty, increased still further by the indescribable charm of spotless innocence, caused her to be sought after in marriage by the sons of the first patrician families. She was still in daily attendance at the public schools, frequented by the youth of both sexes; and among them was the son of Sempronius, prefect or governor of Rome. The young man, captivated by the angelic beauty of Agnes, presented her with the most costly jewels, the first step toward a formal matrimonial engagement. These she firmly refused, informing her suitor that she had already pledged her faith to a Divine Lover. His was no passing attachment: the refusal, and the disclosure of its motive, threw him into an illness that threatened a fatal issue; and, being questioned as to its cause, he told the story of his love. Sempronius, having appealed in vain to Agnes' parents, laid the matter before the ordinary judges, who were his own subordinates, invoking against the maiden and her family the imperial edicts forbidding the profession of the Christian religion. It was hoped that one so young would be easily terrified, by the prospect of torture and a shameful death, into foregoing her pur-

pose, and accepting an alliance with one who was her equal in birth, and devotedly attached to her. But the maiden was insensible alike to the honor of such a union and to the threats held out by the magistrate; nor did her worthy parents do or say aught to move her from her purpose. Her obstinacy being attributed to the magic arts of the Christians, it was deemed necessary to counteract them by sending Agnes to reside in the Temple of Vesta, where, if she persisted in maintaining a life of virginity, she might have a place in the college of vestal virgins. To this proposal the maiden replied, that it was not likely she would elect to become the servant of a dumb-and-deaf idol of stone or metal, after having refused to become the wife of one of Rome's noblest youths. "You are but a child in years," replied Sempronius: "we must not, therefore, give undue weight to the blasphemous words uttered by you against the gods. Do not, however, so demean yourself as to provoke their anger." — "It is not my childish years," Agnes answered, "that dictate my words, or inspire my resolution. The faith that is in me is not to be measured by bodily maturity, but by the ripeness of the interior sense. I do not fear your gods: let them do their utmost against me. Let me only hear them speak to me, and bid me do them worship." Sempronius resolved forthwith to use the most extreme measures. Still he proceeded warily, as well to satisfy the pride of the patrician order, who would not tamely allow one of their own to be subjected to unseemly or unnecessary violence, as to justify by a show of moderation the abominable outrage that he contemplated. She is taken to the temples of the gods, and commanded to burn incense before them. The officers seize her hand to compel her to do so, or at least to put it to her lips in sign of adoration. But every attempt of theirs only results in making her sign herself with the cross. At length, the magistrates, losing all patience, carry their fearful alternative into execution, and order her to be shut up in one of the most abandoned haunts in Rome.

This was solemnly challenging, as the child herself declared, the power of the most high God to shield from the approach of evil the pearl of her soul, that she had vowed to him alone.

"If you but knew who my God is," she modestly said to her judges, "you would never allow your lips to utter such a sentence. But I who do know the power of my Lord Jesus Christ can safely despise what you threaten. I will not sacrifice to your idols, nor shall I suffer any stain from violence. I have ever with me One intrusted with guarding this body of mine, — the Angel of the Lord. The Son of God whom you ignore is an impenetrable wall between me and evil: he is a guardian that sleepeth not, a protector that can never fail me."

The angelic maiden, when placed, beneath the eyes of all Rome, in this ante-chamber of hell, was suddenly seen surrounded with a light so dazzling, that no eye could bear it. The first who dared to approach her were forced to confess the divinity of her faith, and became on the spot humble followers of Christ. Her lover, now more than ever unworthy of her, presumed to draw near, undeterred by what had befallen others, and unawed by the majesty of such innocence and goodness. He was stricken dead at her feet as by a thunderbolt, just as he stretched forth his hand to seize her. These prodigies were represented to the populace outside as an effect of the Christian maiden's superior witchcraft. The death of the governor's son enabled her enemies to awaken a storm of rage among the credulous and ignorant masses. The grief-stricken but now furious father hurried to the spot at the head of an excited multitude, that increased every moment in numbers and in violence. "Thou most cruel of all womankind!" he exclaims, as he perceives the dead body of his boy, "thine object, then, must have been to try on him the potency of thy magic spells." — "Nay," is the gentle answer: "he hath only been given over to the power of the Evil One, whose will he was attempting to fulfill. Others before him came hither, recognized God's protection in my case, and believed. They are alive, and adore as I do. Your son was stricken by God's Angel because he presumed to stretch out his hand against me." — "Let me only see thy Angel restore my son to life, and I shall believe thee." — "Well, then," replied the maiden, "it is time that my Lord Jesus Christ should manifest his power, little as you deserve it. — Go out hence, therefore, all of you, that I may offer him my

supplication." They obey; and she, prostrate on the ground, pours forth her prayer amid abundant tears. All of a sudden the governor and the wild mob outside are startled by the appearance of the dead youth, who now full of life, with radiant face, and a voice that reaches the most distant beholders, exclaims, "There is but one God over heaven and earth and sea; and he it is whom the Christians adore."

This did not convince the Pagan priests and their dependents; for they would not be convinced. The cry of "Witchcraft!" is once more raised among the crowd, and works it up to ungovernable fury. Sempronius, too certain of the truth of the miracle he has beheld, to join in the cry, too time-serving to brave the animosity of a Roman mob, and all too powerless, as he thinks, to protect the innocent Agnes from further violence, commits his authority to an inferior magistrate, and withdraws from the scene.

The Roman mob does what one may expect the many-headed, purblind, and sanguinary monster it is, to do against this witch, this enemy of their gods, — albeit only a child, and so lovely. They will burn her. But the flames they light will not touch her when she is cast into their midst; and nothing remains but to see if that tender and graceful neck of hers can resist the keen edge of cold steel. She hears her new doom pronounced while she is still surrounded by the fire; and kneeling down, with uplifted hands she prays, "O Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who art alone to be worshiped, adored, and feared, I bless thee for that through thine only Son I have been delivered from the hands of these impious men, and have with stainless feet trodden the haunts of the Evil One. Lo! even now the dew of thy Holy Spirit hath extinguished the flames that surround me: they divide on each side of me, and threaten to consume those that have kindled them. I bless thee, O Father to be ever praised, who dost permit me to come to thee without fear amid these fires. Lo! I now behold what I did but believe; I hold what I but hoped for; I embrace what I yearned for. I confess thee with my mouth and with my heart; I desire thee with all the love of my soul. Behold, I go to thee, the living and true God, who,

with thy Son and Holy Spirit, reignest through all eternity!" Without one moment's delay they beheaded her there.

Never throughout the length and breadth of beautiful Italy, since the first spring visited her mounts and plains, did the head of so lovely a flower drop beneath the stroke of unfeeling steel. The mob withdrew to the bloody sports of the amphitheater, or the thousand vile resorts around the public baths, to have their fill of such spectacles and pleasures as were enjoyable to a Roman mob. The family and friends of Agnes were at hand, and only waited till that living tide of mud and blood had withdrawn into its dark and filthy channels. They gathered up all that remained of their darling, — the light of their home, the last and brightest glory of their line. Even if the father's soul was wrung, or the mother's tears fell fast on the lifeless form they folded to their breasts, and the virginal lips now hallowed by death, and thrice hallowed by the solemn witness borne to the Master, — they rejoiced none the less, with swelling and grateful souls, that their God had been glorified once more in his saints; that the wisdom and heroism of a child had triumphed over the might and the rage of imperial Rome. In the night-time, with subdued recital of psalm and prayer, but with souls fired to heroism in presence of the heroic dead, they bore the martyr to her father's farm on the Via Nomentana, bathed sacred head and mutilated body with aromatics and spices, wrapped them in whitest linen, and laid them reverently in their resting-place till the resurrection day.

A legend most beautiful in its significance, even though its authenticity be not susceptible of being proved to the satisfaction of a modern jury, goes on to say, that one night, while the bereaved parents were praying near the tomb of their child, amid the stillness of the Campagna, they were surprised by the apparition of a bright train of damsels clad in richest vesture, and surrounded by surpassing splendor. In their midst was Agnes, shining in the same rich robes, and having at her right hand a lamb whiter than the driven snow. Bidding her companions stop for a moment, she thus addressed her parents, "See that you weep not for me as for one dead to you. Rejoice, rather, with me, and congratulate me; for I have been, like these my companions,

put in possession of the abode of light, and am united in heaven with Him whom I loved on earth in every thought and aim."

The very name of Agnes in Greek is purity. With Thecla the Greek martyr of Iconium, and Mary, the mother of our Lord, she has ever been associated in the Church as the model and patron of spotless innocence of life. Most worthy, asuredly, was the sweet Roman maiden of being near the Lamb, even among his chosen train of virgin souls. For more than fifteen centuries her name has been loved and revered in every Roman household. Two churches bearing it exist, — one inside the city walls, on the spot which she hallowed by her detention; the other beyond the Porta Pia, on the place where she was buried. In the apse of the latter, and above the high altar, is a Mosaic of the seventh century, representing the saint standing and crowned. At her feet lies a sword, and flowers spring up from the earth around. May it prove auspicious of the hope and prayer that is in so many Christian minds, — that the sword of persecution and civil strife may never again be lifted from the earth in Italy, and that the virtues typified in the life and death of the maiden-martyr of Rome may there continue to bloom in the freshness and fragrance of perpetual springtide!

XXX.

Monica, Mother of St. Augustine.

URING the period of comparative repose that followed the accession of Constantine, the influence of woman was neither less salutary nor less honorable than during the apostolic days. Christian mothers throughout the first six centuries made of their homes schools of heroism, whence husbands, brothers, sons, and daughters went forth, ever ready to bear all, and give up all, for the love of the Holy Name. We have had instances of this co-operation in the apostolic age. The records of the period of persecution in the second and third centuries abound in still more striking illustrations of this same truth; while in the fourth and fifth centuries we see Gregory Nazianzen dedicated before his birth to the Most High by his saintly mother Nonna, and trained in the sanctuary by her, like a second Samuel; in the same age and country, and almost in the same city, Basil the Great is trained to the pursuit of the highest sanctity and the highest learning by Macrina his grandmother, and Emmelia his mother — saints, both of them, and the offspring of a line of martyrs. The noble and youthful Anthusa thus devoted her entire existence to rear up her only son, John (Chrysostom), who became Gregory Nazianzen's successor in the see of Constantinople, and the heir to his eloquence and persecutions. So was it with Ambrose in Italy, formed by a holy mother, and seconded in all his labors by a saintly sister; and so with that spiritual son of Ambrose, even more illustrious than he, — Augustine.

Monica, his mother, born at Tagaste (modern Souk Arras) in

Africa, midway between Carthage and Hippo Regius, was the daughter of noble parents, whose fortune had suffered sadly during the civil war waged by the Donatists against the Catholics of Northern Africa, as well as against the imperial authorities. She was born in 332, while this sanguinary contest was raging among the mountainous districts in which her father's home was situated. Monica and her sisters were subjected to the strictest discipline by a venerable woman, a servant of the family, under whose care their mother placed them. She trained them to habits of self-denial as the only preservative against the fearful sensuality that had so long enslaved the African races. Over Monica, in particular, she exercised great watchfulness, having discovered her precious qualities of mind and heart, and fearing for her the tyranny of early habits.

Self-denial was, however, only one, and that by no means the greatest, of Monica's rare qualities. There was in her a sweetness of disposition that no trouble or suffering could imbitter, a serenity of soul that no passion ever ruffled, and a child-like artlessness and simplicity, the fruit of innocence unacquainted with evil, and incapable of suspecting its existence. She was tenderly drawn to the poor and the sick from the very dawn of reason, and would find her delight in ministering to them by every means in her power. But what, above all, distinguished the child, was her fondness for prayer, her rapt and unwearied attention during all private and public devotions. In the little church of Tagaste she loved to spend whole hours, morning and evening, a habit which she fostered till her dying day.

How happened it that parents so thoroughly Christian as those of Monica, and who had suffered so much for their attachment to the faith, could have given her, their pearl of purity and piety, in marriage to a Pagan? We have no means of accounting for this inconsistency. Such unions were always looked upon with disfavor by the Church. Monica resisted her parents' wishes at first, and only yielded a reluctant consent when it was represented to her that she might become an apostle in her husband's household, and win both his soul and those of his kinsfolk and dependents to the true God.

Her husband, Patricius, as his name indicates, was of noble parentage; and, besides being a Pagan in belief, he was addicted to the worst vices of Paganism. He was intemperate, licentious, violent, and a spendthrift. His mother, who ruled his household, was a Pagan like himself, haughty, passionate, and jealous-minded; while her numerous slaves and dependents shared their master's unbelief and vices.

Patricius — though loving his beautiful bride as much, perhaps, as he (a heathen, a drunkard, and libertine) could love, understand, or appreciate one so utterly above and beyond him — treated her fondness for prayer and her retiring modesty as childish superstition, and inveighed against her almsgiving as a guilty waste of his substance; her love for the outcast, sick, and poor, as meanness of spirit; and her assiduity at the divine offices as a neglect of her household duties. She avoided in her bearing, her charities, and her devotions, every thing that could give unnecessary cause of complaint; endeavored to make her husband feel that she only sought to make his home bright and cheerful, full of pleasant sounds and pleasant faces. Returning from his longest and vilest debauches, he found her sweet smile always welcoming him, and her whole time devoted to his comfort, as if he were the most loving, tender, faithful, and devoted of husbands himself. To his frequent and brutal outbursts of temper, and the coarse manners and speech that are the inseparable accompaniments of intoxication, she opposed soft words, and gentle, winning ways, that disarmed anger and soothed irritation. When she wished to remonstrate or reprove, she waited for the sober morrow, when reason had returned, and, with reason, remorse; then, watching for the proper moment to let the light shine on those poor, sick eyes, she laid the truth before him, oh, so lovingly and persuasively! For nearly twenty years did she wait and pray, pouring forth her silent tears before the mercy-seat for that sick soul, so incurably diseased that, to all human judgment, no sense of God or love of purity could ever enter there. For twenty years she made her whole life of every day and hour a continual and most eloquent lesson by which God sought to enlighten his darkness, holding it up to him as

a clear mirror in which he could see reflected the deformity of his own conduct. Prayers, patience, purity, and unvarying meekness, triumphed at last; and in 371 he died a repentant sinner, a devoted and humble Christian.

Whilst Monica was still in the first stage of her most bitter trials, she was blessed by the birth of a child on Nov. 13, 354, — a day ever held in grateful remembrance by the whole Western Church; for the new-born babe, named Aurelius Augustinus, was reverenced by all after-ages as foremost among the great teachers of Christianity. A second son, Navigius, and a daughter named Perpetua, after the great martyr-saint of Carthage, came in succession to gladden Monica's eyes. If the two younger children, like their mother, resembled the lovely flowers of chaste beauty and delicate fragrance that bloom in our temperate climes, Augustine's nature, on the contrary, had all the wild luxuriance and dazzling splendor characteristic of the magnificent flora of his native soil. His father being a Pagan, and deriding baptism, would not permit the boy to receive it. The poor mother had to content herself with having him inscribed among the catechumens, and signed with the cross. The remaining ceremonies were deferred till he should arrive at a riper age. But, as was to be expected from such a mother, she watched the first dawn of his intelligence to fill his memory with the thought of God and the name of the Redeemer. Indeed, he imbibed so early and tender a love for that holy name, that he was afterward — even in his most erratic period of skepticism — repelled successively by every religious or philosophic system in which that holy name was not central. During a sudden and dangerous illness in childhood, Augustine earnestly besought his parents to have him baptized. But, having recovered while his mother was hastening to satisfy him, he was not permitted by his father to proceed any further.

Then came his school-days under Pagan masters, with the terrible influences of Pagan schoolmates added to his father's corrupting example and advice, and that in a city and neighborhood as yet but little influenced for good by the virtues of the Christian minority. Evil habits sprung up in that privileged soul,

and multiplied there, and became inveterate. It is in such rich natures as that of Augustine that evil habit acquires a fearfully rapid and fatal ascendency.

The worst features in Augustine's case were carefully concealed from the mother, while her own perfect innocence of heart did not permit her to suspect the existence or the growth of the evil. Besides, his deep love and reverence for such a mother, manifested in so many endearing ways, was sufficient to blind her to his true danger. Then she was proud — and what mother would not be? — of the transcendent gifts that won him, even in his thirteenth year, the enthusiastic admiration of his masters and school-fellows. Eloquence — far more then throughout the Roman world than now among ourselves — was the certain road to eminence and wealth. When, therefore, his first masters at Tagaste declared that they could teach him nothing further in the then all-important science of rhetoric, he was sent successively to Madaura and Carthage, where the African youth were trained in schools that rivaled those of Alexandria and Athens. It was a fatal change for Augustine, who was thus removed from beneath his mother's watchful care, and the powerful influence of her counsels, while being exposed to the all-corrupting atmosphere of a Pagan community, and the irresistible force of his companions' evil examples. In both cities he won the highest academical honors, but in both outstripped his classmates in licentiousness, as well as in genius and proficiency. While Augustine was winning the most coveted literary honors at Carthage, his father died; and he returned to his widowed mother a professed Manichæan, having exchanged the faith of his boyhood for a crude mixture of Oriental materialism and Christian tenets and practices. Besides, he returned not alone: Monica's home was made a center of propagandism for a heresy that she abhorred; and her younger children's souls were subjected to the poison of their brother's teaching and examples. This was too much: his mother would not tolerate him beneath her roof.

Her heart being lacerated by the separation and its grievous cause, and crushed by this twofold bereavement, she betook herself to the sweetest refuge of the distressed, — to prayer, and the

bosom of the common Father. Her life now became one of perpetual pleading with the Divine Mercy in favor of the lost one. Her tears flowed uninterruptedly night and day. A holy bishop, to whom she had recourse in her extremity of woe, dissuaded her from having recourse to controversy or argument in order to make the erring Augustine see the evil of his ways; but he consoled her by assuring her solemnly that "it was impossible that the son of such tears should perish." About the same time she was by a vision further re-assured concerning his future return to God, and induced to take him back to her home, and to treat him with more motherly kindness. The grace vouchsafed him in answer to her tears and prayers came, at first, in the form of an intolerable unrest and remorse, caused by the remembrance of the divine holiness described to him in boyhood by his mother, and shadowed forth in her own angelic life. "So I fretted," he tells us, "I sighed, wept, tormented myself, and took neither rest nor advice; for I bore about with me a rent and defiled soul, impatient of being borne by me; and where to rest it I found not. . . . A heavy burden of misery weighed me down. To thee, O Lord, should it have been raised, for thee to lighten and remove from me. This I knew, but was neither willing nor able."

In 382 the loss of a dear friend, impaired health, the hope of acquiring in Rome distinction and fortune, as well as a remedy for his interior wretchedness, impelled him to go to Italy; whither he went by a stratagem, leaving his mother behind. But Augustine was disappointed at Rome, as he had been, again and again, in Carthage. His Manichæan opinions fell away from him, like clothes that he had worn out or outgrown; and nothing remained in his mind but the doctrines of Plato concerning the existence in the divine intelligence of a "Word," which arrested his attention as bearing a resemblance to the Christian teaching on the Trinity. Then, again, he fell sick of the malarial fever; and, when the Roman Government was asked to send a teacher of rhetoric to Milan, Augustine obtained the appointment, and set out for the north of Italy. He had written to console his mother for his absence and his mishaps. He wrote, also, to inform her of his departure for Milan; but she was already on the way to join him.

To defray the expenses of her long journey, she parted with her jewels and other valuables. He was sick, as she learned from his letters; his soul was in danger: what are all jewels and treasures of earth, compared to a son's soul, in the estimation of a Christian mother?

What was her consternation, on arriving in Rome, to find that her son was in Milan, five hundred miles away, at the northern extremity of Italy! No matter: she was thankful that death had not taken him away from her in her absence, and unbaptized. The long journey before her, and the slight provision she could make for it, cost her brave heart but a momentary pang; for she had a prophetic assurance that this most laborious pilgrimage should win the sole reward she coveted here below, — the conversion of her poor wanderer.

There was in the very atmosphere of the church of Milan, and even in the distant communion with such a bishop as Ambrose, a soothing and healing influence for the wearied and wounded soul of Augustine, whom Ambrose received, as Augustine says, "like a father." It was impossible to be present once at any of the daily services at which the former presided, without being impressed with the conviction that God was worshiped there in spirit and truth, and that he was a living, present reality, filling and overflowing the souls of both pastor and people.

The example of Ambrose himself, who had given up a high position in the government of Italy, and renounced the certain prospect of still higher honors, to become a poor churchman, as poor and self-denying as an anchorite, and the further examples of such contemporaries as Jerome, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, and John Chrysostom, whose fame filled the churches of West and East alike, inspired in Augustine a vague desire for a life of apostolic purity and abnegation. These yearnings and aspirations were shared by his devoted friends, — Alypius, Nebridius, and others, — whom his genius and many precious qualities of heart had bound to his fortunes. They thus formed a little community, to which Monica, who had now been re-united to her son, was at once mother and servant, using all a woman's art to have their home filled with every comfort, and embellished with the charms

of simplicity and refinement, so dear to men who have spent long hours in the schools and the law courts. Around her, as center, after their weary days of mental toil, they were wont to discuss the religious and philosophical questions that were uppermost in their own thoughts. Augustine tells us that his mother's intelligence of the Scriptures, and her insight into the deepest mysteries of the after-life and the unseen world, enabled her to be a guide and teacher to himself and his friends.

At this time, Augustine writes, "I was weighed down with the encumbrance of this world, pleasantly, as one is used to be with sleep; and my meditations upon Thee were like the efforts of men who would awake, and yet are steeped again under the depth of their slumber. . . . When Thou saidst to me, 'Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee,' . . . I could give Thee but the slow and sleepy answer, 'Presently, yes, presently; wait a while;' though that presently was never present, and that while became long."

The decisive hour of awaking came at length, brought about by the visit to Augustine and his friends of a countryman of theirs named Pontitian, a high officer of the imperial court, and a fervent Christian, whose lofty conversation, and discussion of the Christian heroism of the apostles and martyrs and self-denying men of God, pierced Augustine's deepest soul with conviction of his own unworthiness.

No sooner had Pontitian taken leave of Augustine than the latter, "troubled both in mind and countenance," seized upon Alypius, and exclaimed, "What is wrong with us? What is this? What heardest thou? The unlearned start up and carry heaven by storm; and we, with our learning, lack heart, and wallow here in flesh and blood! Because others have been before us, are we ashamed to follow? Or, rather, are we not ashamed at not following?" He withdrew from Alypius, leaving the latter mute with amazement, cast himself prostrate on the ground under a fig-tree, and gave full vent to his tears. "And the streams from mine eyes gushed forth, an acceptable offering unto Thee" (he exclaims). . . . "I sent up these sorrowful cries, 'How long how long? To-morrow, and to-morrow? Why

not now? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?' . . . Thence we go in to my mother. We make it known to her; she rejoiceth. We relate to her how it came to pass; she leapeth for joy, and triumpheth, and blesseth Thee, who art able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think." Seventeen years had thus elapsed since Monica began her struggle for that dear soul's conversion.

For a few months now the friends retired to a villa on the slope of the Northern Appenines, returning to Milan about the beginning of Lent. Meanwhile the bishop bestowed especial care in disposing Augustine's soul for the new birth in Christ, at Eastertide. Adeodatus, his son, was baptized along with him. It is said that during this preparation the holy prelate and his great convert composed the hymn known as the *Te Deum*, and that it was first sung by alternate choirs after the baptismal ceremony, at midnight, on Easter, A.D. 387.

"And we were baptized" (Augustine relates), "and solicitude about our past life left us. . . . How greatly did I weep in Thy hymns and canticles, deeply moved by the voices of Thy sweet-speaking church! The voices flowed into mine ears, and the truth was poured forth into my heart, whence the agitation of my piety overflowed, and my tears ran over; and blessed was I therein."

We must now hasten to the end. The feet of Monica scarcely seemed to touch the earth as she, and the little band who reverenced, loved, and followed her as their common mother, turned their faces once more toward Rome, bent on departing speedily for their native Africa, to spread there far and wide the sacred fire that burned within their own breasts. The journey now was all pleasantness to the overflowing motherly heart, — overflowing with a rapture and a thankfulness that burst forth in spite of her habitual calm and quiet mood.

At Ostia, now a solitude and a waste, then a busy seaport with a population of eighty thousand, they had to wait for a ship to convey them to Carthage. The joys of the past twelve months, the long journey of five hundred miles across the Apennines at the approach of winter, and the increased austerities and pro-

tracted prayers with which she had sought to make both her intercession and her gratitude more acceptable to the Divine Majesty, began to re-act upon the feeble and aged frame of Monica during these days of waiting. The end of that most beautiful life was at hand. The autumnal fever, prevalent even then along that level and unwholesome shore, had seized upon her exhausted body.

"Scarcely five days later," thus the touching narrative proceeds, "she was prostrated by fever. On the ninth day of her illness, the fifty-sixth year of her age, and the thirty-third of mine, was that religious and devoted soul set free from the body. "I closed her eyes; and there flowed a great sadness into my heart, and it was passing into tears, when mine eyes at the same time, by a violent effort of my will, sucked back the fountain dry, and woe was me in such a struggle! As soon as she breathed her last, the boy Adeodatus burst out into wailing; but, being checked by us all, he became quiet. . . . We did not consider it fitting to celebrate that funeral with tearful plaints and moans; for on such wise are they who die unhappy, or are altogether dead, wont to be mourned. But she neither died unhappy, nor did she altogether die. . . . What, then, was it that did grievously pain me within, but the newly-made wound from having that most sweet and dear habit of living together suddenly broken off? . . . Little by little I recalled my former thoughts of Thy handmaid, her devout conversation toward Thee, her holy tenderness and attentiveness toward us, which was suddenly taken away from me; and it was pleasant to me to weep in Thy sight for her and for me. . . . And I set free the tears, that they might flow at their will, spreading them beneath my heart; and it rested in them, for Thy ears were nigh me. . . . Read it who will, and interpret how he will; and if he finds me to have sinned in weeping for my mother during so small a part of an hour, — that mother who was for a while dead to mine eyes, who had for many years wept for me that I might live in Thine eyes, — let him not laugh at me, but rather, if he be a man of noble charity, let him weep for my sins against Thee, the Father of all the brethren of Thy Christ."

XXXI.

Brigid, or Bride, of Kildare.

PATRICIUS, the husband of Monica, died in 371; and in 372, according to the best authorities, was born that other Patricius (or Patrick, as he is now called), the future apostle of Ireland. He was of Gallo-Roman parentage, a near relative of the great St. Martin of Tours, who, better than any other man known to history, deserves to be called the Apostle of half-pagan Gaul. Martin died in 397, and was followed to the grave by two thousand monks (whom he had trained to be the teachers and the models of the populations they converted), by the bishops of the surrounding churches (many of whom had been his disciples), and by a whole people in tears. Patricius may have witnessed this imposing spectacle of a people's grief and veneration for their benefactor and parent. He was then in his twenty-fifth year, and had just returned to Gaul, after having been six years a slave among the Pagan Celts of Ireland. Perhaps the gratitude of his uncle's flock, displayed so touchingly around the lifeless remains of their apostle, moved the heroic soul of the nephew to carry out without delay a resolution formed in captivity, — that of devoting his life to the conversion of that far-off land in which he had been a bondsman. A second captivity, with all its inseparable misery, delayed the execution of his generous purpose, while confirming it only the more. After some time spent in St. Martin's great monastery of Marmoutiers, near Tours, he was attracted by the fame of the then unrivaled school of Lerins, and went thither to perfect

himself in the secular and sacred knowledge so necessary to an apostolic laborer.

It was in that school, among men who have left behind immortal works and a deathless fame, that Patricius was to be found about the year 428, just when Monica's son, Augustine, was delivering to the fishermen of Hippo, on the opposite shore of the Mediterranean, the last of his beautiful instructions amid the terror and the confusion of the Vandalic invasion. Augustine died in 430: in 429 two illustrious disciples of Honoratus of Lerins — Germanus of Auxerre, and Lupus of Troyes — were sent to Britain to oppose there the spread of the Pelagian doctrines. They were sent at the instance of the Roman deacon, Palladius, who at that time was making the first attempt to convert the Celts of Ireland. With them went Patricius, his whole soul stirred with the hope of bearing the truth of the gospel to the island which had become so dear to him. After a short time spent in Britain, Patricius was sent to Rome by Germanus, with the recommendation that he should receive a special appointment as missionary to Ireland; and in 432 he returned thither to begin his apostolic labors.

The faith preached by Patricius was accepted without violent opposition or long delay. What share the preacher's own antecedents or personal qualities may have had in the rapid change of belief and manners that ensued, it were idle here to inquire. Certain it is, that, when he closed his career in 493, the mass of the population, with its rulers and the governing classes, had adopted the Christian faith. No less certain is it, that, ere another century had elapsed, the entire island was covered with monastic institutions, in which men and women, though living separately, vied with each other, under the impulse of the same spirit and the direction of ecclesiastical authority, in fostering with equal ardor the fairest fruits of religion and learning. In the sixth century, colonies of apostolic men and women issued from these swarming hives to plant the seeds of Christian civilization in every country of Western Europe.

Women had their glorious share in this great work of transformation. Among those who lent their aid in this to Patrick

and his immediate successors was Brigid of Kildare. She was born in 453, at Foughart, in our day a little village overlooking the Bay of Dundalk, and called in the seventeenth century, by the Irish-speaking country-folk, *Fochart Brighde*, or "Fochart of Brigid." "It seems likely enough," says her biographer, O'Hanlon, "that the old, circular, cone-shaped Dun, which rises high over the adjoining fields on the very summit of Foughart Hill, about three miles north-west of Dundalk, supported and protected the house of Dubtach (Brigid's father). A circular level on the top was forty feet in diameter; and around the circumference appears to have extended a wide breastwork of masonry, laid with mortar. A deep circular fosse surrounded the lower ascent of this high Dun, from the top of which a magnificent view of the bay and town of Dundalk, with the sublime crags of the Carlingford Mountains, extending far into the sea toward the north and east, can be obtained. Near this Dun . . . on the very summit of a rising hill, are the ruins of St. Brigid's old church."

Both her parents were of noble rank, though, according to a less reliable account, her mother was a captive, and an inferior wife in a family not yet wholly converted to the gospel. Her most ancient historian, however, speaks of both parents as Christians, and of the child as having received a nurture and education in every way suited both to their rank and to their fervor as recent converts. Her beauty, as she grew up, was surpassed only by her precocious wisdom and piety. The same divine grace that blossomed into such rare flowers of purity and holiness in the Cappadocian homes of Nonna and Emmelia, in the senatorial palaces of Rome, and beneath the African roof that beheld the birth of Monica, found no rebellious soil in that Green Isle, the last spot of Europe on which the sun sets. Brigid manifested from early childhood Monica's absorbing love of prayer and the poor. This was the generating principle of all her other great qualities, the source of the incredible energy that enabled her to create so many institutions, that gave her an all-controlling influence over princes, prelates, and peoples, and that sustained her under sufferings and labors which the most robust frame could not have withstood without a miracle.

Happier than Monica in being born into a society all aglow with the first fervor of its devotion to Christ, Brigid was allowed to reject the suits of all earthly lovers, and to give her whole existence to the propagation of her Master's kingdom. She dedicated herself to God in her sixteenth year, together with several of her youthful companions, and received the monastic veil in a church on the eastern side of the Hill of Croghan, on the confines of Westmeath and King's County. The site, like her birthplace, is only marked by a cemetery surrounding the fragments of a ruined church; but the hearts of the people far and wide treasure deeply their veneration for the hallowed spot: there, since sixteen hundred years, their forefathers chose to rest in hope of the resurrection, and there, too, they fondly aspire themselves to repose in death. Undying faith and hope and love, — it is to no earthly ruin that they cling. The ivy may preserve for a time, against the fury of the wind and the rain, the crumbling wall on which it hangs its green mantle; but its roots will disintegrate at length every fragment that would else have earlier fallen before the blast. Where a nation's faith is built up in the heart, when it is there fostered by knowledge, and made a part of the soul's substance by loving and enlightened practice, it becomes imperishable like the soul itself. Persecution can only make the soul's holiest and most powerful affections cling the closer to it, infolding it in a more sheltering embrace. And where, as in Ireland, the hand that despoiled and tore down the sanctuaries in which a whole people worshiped, with the cherished institutions devoted to science and charity and the pursuit of spiritual perfection, the national heart with one undivided love will cling to the faith that is divine, because it is associated with their lost liberty, which is of earth. These mighty affections are ready at any moment to be converted into hatred of the spoiler and oppressor. Were England to seek sincerely to repair the wrongs of centuries, and to render impossible the retribution ever to be feared from the most feeble, there is but one course of reparation, — to build up, one by one, the ruins made by the rapacious hordes of Elizabeth in their greed for spoil, and those made no less thoroughly by the blind fanati-

cism of Cromwell's ruthless bands. He would be no false seer who should date the beginning of a cordial union between the sister islands from the day that would behold a glorious basilica looking down from the Hill of Foughart on the stormy expanse of Dundalk Bay, and the Cathedral of Kildare with its once vast cloisters arising from their ruins, and gladdening afar the populations of the valley of the Liffey. A million spent each year would restore many a noble pile throughout a land that can never cease to cherish the name and the faith of Brigid of Kildare. The brave old race that has been alienated by secular injustice, and that still is humiliated by the sight of its ruined sanctuaries and its lost nationality, can be won back only by a generous policy of restoration. The day is coming fast when loyal Irish hearts may save England from the fate of France.

It was not at Kildare that Brigid established her first sisterhood. The neighborhood of Ardagh, and of the church in which she had consecrated herself to the divine service, sheltered her infant community. Nevertheless, it is the monastery of Kildare that became in time the center of her vast network of institutions. Her fame had spread far and wide, even before her sixteenth year. It had increased still more when she became the head of a religious community; and, as it was founded especially on the gratitude of the poor and suffering class, the people were disposed to welcome her with enthusiasm whithersoever she went. Her arrival in the neighborhood, whatever may have been the motive of her change of abode, was hailed as a special favor of Providence.

She sought as the site of her contemplated monastery a solitary spot, slightly elevated above the neighboring valley of the Liffey. A growth of oak covered it; and beneath the wide-spreading branches of one lordly tree the holy pilgrim built her first humble cell of wattles. Like the first cell constructed by a swarm of bees, it soon grew by the addition of others in ever-increasing numbers. A church as lowly, at first, as the dwellings of the abbess and her sisterhood, had to be constructed; and, the clustered cells being the abode of souls devoted to the relief of every spiritual and bodily need, there were soon hospitals

for the sick, and hostelries for poor strangers and pilgrims. Thus a city arose, called, after the first little cell beneath the oak-tree, Kill-Dara, "the Cell of the Oak."

It was a peculiarity of the Irish church and its offshoots for several centuries after St. Patrick, that to every temple erected, though never so humble, was attached a body of men living under some monastic form. It were hard to say, in looking into the first ecclesiastical establishments of Ireland, Iona, and Scotland, whether it was around the city or country church, as center, that sprung up with such marvelous rapidity the monasteries for both sexes with the teeming schools, or whether it was the overflowing monastery that compelled the erection of the church, the presence of a numerous body of priests, the cultivation of music and all the civilizing arts, the transcription of the sacred text of the Bible and its authorized commentaries, together with an enthusiastic love of letters, human and divine. At any rate, from the days of Patrick and Brigid of Kildare, monasteries and churches and schools covered the land: though constructed of poor materials, and manifesting in their beginnings but little of architectural elegance, every one of these institutions became at once a seminary of learning as well as of piety. And this unique and most beautiful springtide of Christianity in Ireland went on increasing in loveliness and rich promise, till, in an evil hour, the Pagan Norseman discovered this moral paradise, and poured in his bands of rovers, despoiling, desecrating, and ruining all.

Thanks to the powerful co-operation of Brigid and other kindred souls, women as well as men, even before the death of the Apostle of Ireland, it was given him to realize the ideal conceived by him on the little Island of Lerins, amid the blue waves and the lovely climate of the Western Mediterranean. He had made of the people among whom he had been a slave in his boyhood most willing captives to the law of Christ, and of their fair isle one vast school, in which entire generations were trained to the knowledge of natural and supernatural truth, to the love of all that was beautiful in religion and art, and to the practice of all the charities that make of earth the foretaste of heaven.

The veneration and gratitude of Western Christendom bestowed on it the title of "The Island of Saints," which had been before that borne by Lerins.

Would we discover what virtue in particular gave to Brigid the ascendency that she exercised over her contemporaries, we find, that, soon after the opening of her very first monastery, she chose as the virtue which she was to practice before and above all others, — mercy. Leaving to each one of the sisterhood to select from out the virtues pronounced "blessed" by the Master (Matt. v.) the one toward which the interior guide inclined her most, the abbess chose as her own that mercy which she had loved with an absorbing love from her first childhood. Mercy seeks out the ills under which body and spirit are suffering, and applies herself to relieve them: she removes evil from the sufferer and sinner, and bestows in its stead the highest good. The fulfillment of this function of mercy occupied the whole life of Brigid of Kildare, and gives her a distinctive physiognomy among and above all the saints of her native land. While yet a mere child, she had, in visiting the sick and needy of the neighborhood, exhausted all her little store; and, as many sufferers still remained without relief, she plucked the jewels from a sword presented to her father by his suzerain. The latter, while visiting Dubtach, heard of the child's holy prodigality, and, calling her to him, asked her how she had dared to give away in alms a present from a king. "I should have given away," she replied, "my father's wealth and your own, nay, even your very person, to save Christ from perishing in the persons of his poor."

The need of such an heroic spirit of generosity was as widely felt in Ireland when Brigid came to be Abbess of Kildare as it was in the days of her childhood. The profession of Christianity by the entire nation did not immediately do away with slavery, serfage, and the manifold evils they entailed on the masses who groaned under them, nor with the inveterate habit of invading the neighboring countries in quest of plunder and captives. These evil customs had their roots too deeply and widely planted in the soil, to be extirpated in a single generation or century. Nothing but the patient heroism of Christian charity, and the

slow growth of that feeling of brotherly equality that comes from the living love of the Father, could effectually abolish the evil by making every heart feel its opposition to the highest principles and the divinest hopes of the Christian.

From the ancient biographies still left us of Brigid of Kildare, and the contradictions and exaggerations so prominent in the legends relating to her, this much is evident to the unprejudiced student, — that her whole existence was one uninterrupted act of devotion to the poor and suffering, and that every miracle recorded of her had for its aim some deed of corporeal or spiritual mercy. She did, indeed, take extraordinary and unremitting care to make her own life, and that of every one of the many sisterhoods founded by her throughout the land, in every way conformable to the life of her Crucified Love; but this personal holiness in herself and others she only considered to be an indispensable means of winning souls to him, and removing from every individual heart, as well as from the entire body politic, those heart-burnings and practical wrongs that make brother hate brother, estrange inferiors from superiors, and prevent the laws of human society from being one universal law of love, like that of the Father.

As soon as the cross has been planted beneath the wide-spreading oak on the hill-top, and the first poor cells have been erected there to shelter its little community of nuns, their white flowing vestments are known far and wide to the needy and sick as those of their benefactresses. And so the city grows from its lowly beginnings as the refuge of the sick and poor, and the ever-open haven of all souls that long to escape the storms and shipwrecks of passion, or hunger for justice and mercy. So is it with the thousands of similar institutions in various parts of the island, founded in unfrequented valley or on barren hillside, by swarms from "The Cell of the Oak;" each new house becoming a center of piety, of charity, of learning and civilization, to a neighborhood till then unvisited by the spirit of mercy, the spirit of God. Let the traveler from America who now scans, as he sails along these shores, the ruins that crown so many elevations, or nestle in secluded dells, — like the skeleton left by the

savage Indian to blanch on the fair earth, — bethink him of what Ireland was a century after Brigid's death. The monasteries that resounded with God's praises at sunset all along the western and southern coast of the Green Isle were only advanced posts of the army of Christian science and sanctity, looking over the western ocean for a world beyond to bless and humanize. The whole interior of the island was filled with them. And should our pilgrim ever roam over its mountains and valleys, its lovely lakes and broad rivers, the picturesque ruins that are sure to arrest his eye in the sites best suited to meditation and study, or to active mercy in populous centers, must remind him of how much of the beautiful creation of fifteen hundred years ago was the work of that lowly maiden, so dear to a nation's heart as Brigid of Kildare.

When that life, so full of every heroic virtue and goodly deed that can kindle the ambition of noble, womanly hearts, closed amid the tears of her sisters, the lamentations of the poor, and the mourning of a whole people, her daughters in religion kept unquenched and undimmed for many a long century the fire that their foundress had once lighted within "The Cell of the Oak." Perhaps it was at first the large fire, destined, amid the frequent storms of that clime, to guide the poor homeless wanderer from afar to where he could find shelter and warmth; and who can count the thousands of benighted poor who came to lay them down, refreshed and secure, to sleep around that blaze? When the poor cluster of cells built of wattles and clay had given place to more substantial structures, when the beneficence of princes and peoples enabled the holy abbess to erect spacious hospitals for the poor of Christ, and a queenly city covered hillside and slopes, gratitude for past favors, a sweet remembrance of God's fostering mercy to his poor and their handmaids, urged them to feed night and day that sacred fire, so truly emblematic of early and widespread charity. It was extinguished in 1220 by Henry, the Anglo-Norman Archbishop of Dublin, who deemed it an emblem of unmeaning and dangerous superstition. Alas! with it was extinguished, and for ever, that spirit of brotherly love which should beat in the heart of a Christian nation at the first

principle of its vitality, and the first condition of its unity and strength. But to us, here in this Western World, who need and cherish heroic virtue and self-denying charity as the sure pledges of God's abiding presence with us, the example of the holy patroness of Ireland shall ever burn bright, like unextinguishable fire lighted upon the top of Ireland's westernmost mountain, guiding our path to acts of self-sacrifice, and warming our hearts to emulation of ancestral generosity.

Ch. Landelle

XXXII.

St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland.

IT is not alone amid the seclusion of the cloister that are found angelic souls animating earthly bodies, like Brigid of Kildare: the history of every Christian nation has preserved the names of many such, who adorned the throne with their shining virtues, and proved themselves the benefactresses of their people and the models of their sex for all time. Such, in France, were Clotilde and Blanche of Castile; such, in Germany, were Elizabeth of Hungary, the heroine of our next chapter, and the Empress Cunegunda, wife of St. Henry; and such was that Margaret, whose perfect life should ever be the blessing and the boast of Scotland, over which she reigned, and of England, from whose royal line she sprung.

The five centuries that intervened between the death of the sainted Abbess of Kildare, in 518, and the birth of the Princess Margaret, in 1046, had been most eventful to the "sister islands" of the West, and the races that peopled them. God, who destined them to be one day the parents of vast empires in worlds undiscovered as yet, not only allowed the germs of Christian manhood to grow up there slowly, like all things that he wills to live long, but he would have them grow to a robust maturity amid incessant storms.

The usurper Macbeth still held the Scottish throne of the "gracious Duncan," when, in 1046, Margaret was born in Hungary, where her father, Edward Atheling, was living in exile. At the very same time, her future husband, Malcolm Canmore, or

Greathead, the son and successor of the murdered Duncan, was also an exile in England, under the protection of St. Edward the Confessor. Margaret's career is most remarkable for that providential disposition of events, through which souls chosen to be the instruments of a nation's regeneration are trained by privation and suffering to absolute dependence on God and most unselfish love of his best interests here below, — indispensable conditions for the accomplishment of the divine purpose.

The noble Edmund Ironside fell in 1016 beneath the stroke of a traitor; and his two infant sons, Edmund and Edward, the lineal descendants of Alfred the Great, were sent first to the court of Sweden, and next, for greater security, to that of St. Stephen, King of Hungary, at Buda. Prince Edward lost his saintly protector, Stephen, in 1038, having had in him the accomplished model of the Christian king, statesman, and civilizer. He profited so well by the lessons of this great master, that Stephen's successor on the throne of Hungary, Andrew, was induced to bestow on the young English exile the hand of his own sister-in-law, Agatha, daughter of the German emperor, Henry III. In 1058 Edward, who was the lawful heir to the English crown, was by his uncle, King Edward the Confessor, recalled to England with his wife and three young children, Edgar, Christina, and Margaret, then in her twelfth year.

But in 1060, both he and his pious wife died; and then came, in 1066, the death of the Confessor himself. Edgar, the lawful Atheling, being but a child, was not to be thought of as the ruler of a kingdom where the crown was claimed by the King of Denmark and the Duke of Normandy. He and his sisters were guarded jealously in London till the entrance into that city of William the Conqueror. During these sorrowful years, Margaret watched over her brother and sister with the preternatural tenderness and wisdom that all at once flow into the soul of an elder sister when she is suddenly left, by her parents' death, to fill their place. The Norman William had been very dear to the Confessor, for whose memory and virtues he cherished a heartfelt veneration. When the royal orphans were first presented to him, he was struck by the extraordinary beauty of Margaret and her sister, and

touched by the helplessness of the fair-haired and blue-eyed boy, the scion of Alfred's line. William took the child in his arms, and kissed him with visible emotion.

Soon, however, the Norman rule became intolerable, and the Saxon nobles openly spoke of Edgar as their sole legitimate sovereign. To save him and his sister from the perils of a hopeless struggle, their guardian, Cospatrick, Earl of Durham, secretly bore them on shipboard, and set sail for the Continent, purposing to seek an asylum for them in the court of Buda. But a storm drove the vessel from its course to the shore of Scotland, where the long-tried and large-hearted Canmore received the tender fugitives with a respect and a magnificence that testified of his grateful remembrance of the welcome once given himself by Edward the Confessor.

The wind that bore their ship to the Scottish coast was one laden with priceless blessing for the hospitable land and its people. Malcolm, who had known Edward Atheling only to love his many kingly qualities, espoused the cause of his orphans as if it were his own, and forthwith crossed the English border at the head of an army destined to co-operate with the supporters of the boy Edgar. It was all too late. Every rising of the latter's partisans had been suppressed with the prompt energy so characteristic of the Conqueror; and Malcolm could do no better for his *protégé* than to effect a compromise, leaving William in undisputed possession of the English crown, and guaranteeing to Edgar large estates in England, together with a pension to himself and his sisters. Christina, whose young life had hitherto been one of storm and unrest, sought the repose of the cloister, while Margaret became the bride of Malcolm. He had not thought of her as such when he took up arms in favor of her brother; but the beauty of her soul, much more than the extraordinary graces of her person, had made her so dear to the chivalrous and affectionate Scottish people, that the king deemed their warm admiration for the sweet stranger an indication of the divine will that she should become his queen.

In the court of Buda she had been first trained in all the knowledge offered by the united civilizations of the East and

West, besides the inestimable advantage of living in an atmosphere made holy by such a king as St. Stephen. In England she found a second mother in Queen Edith, a daughter of the mighty and unprincipled Earl Goodwin, who possessed every virtue lacked by her father and brothers. Once raised to the throne of Scotland, she felt herself sent by God to the wild, turbulent, and generous clans who called her queen, for the sole purpose of devoting her life to their good. Her husband's noble nature had received but little of culture amid the vicissitudes of his career of protracted exile and perpetual warfare against the rude and unsettled populations of his own Highlands. But he idolized the angel that Providence had so strangly brought to him to be the light of his court and whole kingdom. Nurtured in strife, and delighting in battle, as did the sea-lion among the stormy billows of the northern ocean, Malcolm Canmore was like a little child in the presence of his youthful bride. He could not cease wondering how it had happened that he, among all living men, was chosen to possess a treasure too precious almost for earthly love. Thierry, or Theodoric, the queen's private chaplain, who has left us a touching picture of their wedded lives, describes how Margaret tamed the wild warrior king till she made of him the gentlest of men, and kindest of masters. She made him believe and feel, with ever-increasing certainty, that every thought and aim and word and act of hers was directed to his own happiness. He knew that her whole heart and life were his; that it was for him she spent her long hours in morning and night devotion; that it was to draw down the divine blessing on him, that she lavished aid on the poor, and her tenderest care on the suffering; and that it was to make him the most loved and honored of princes, that she spared no artifice to win the respect and affection of his untutored nobles, and no labor to lighten the burthens, and brighten the homes, of the poorer classes. Hence, not only did he place no obstacle in the way of her charities, but he aided in every possible way to carry out her plans of reform and improvement in Court and Church and State. She loved to call around her frequently the numerous attendants at court, together with the many nobles who shared the king's unbounded hospitality at Dunferm-

line, and to explain to them the mysteries of Christ's life, and the beautiful lessons of the gospel morality. On these occasions, Malcolm would interpret her discourse to them, adding his own exhortations to the sweet teaching of the lovely young preacher. He would address her in public and private with a reverence that amounted to veneration, kissing her hand, as if it were a holy thing, before accomplishing any request of hers; manifesting for her every wish the promptest and most loving obedience; waiting on her in chapel while she knelt and prayed, as if he were doing service before the throne of the Most High and before the court of heaven; carrying himself her missal, or "Book of Hours," and kissing them as he presented them to her, or received them from her hand. Such was the spirit of gentle and Christian courtesy that Malcolm and his queen introduced into the court but lately stained by the murderous crimes of Macbeth and his wife. Of course, this high example was more or less imitated in every castle in the land; and thus, from above downward, spread the blessed influence of Margaret's sweet temper and angelic life.

The love which the queen and her husband displayed toward the Divine Majesty in all that pertained to the beauty of God's house, and the decencies of public and private devotion, was shown more strikingly still in what they both did for the service of the poor and sick. As in the Christian Spain of our own day, so was it in the Scotland of Malcolm Canmore and Margaret, Christ himself was revered and served in his needy and suffering members. The queen and her husband never sat down to their meal till they had waited on a number of poor persons at another table, to whom they brought with their own hands a part of the banquet prepared for themselves. On certain days it was their custom, before waiting on these poor guests at table, to wash their feet. This Margaret at first did alone; but she was soon joined by her husband, who learned to imitate the example of the Master, and to kneel at the feet of the lowliest of his subjects.

This ever-watchful and all-embracing charity seized every opportunity to mitigate, when it could not arrest, the horrors of "border warfare," ransoming from out the royal purse the Scot-

tish captives carried off to England, or purchasing the liberty of English prisoners made by the Scots. What wonder that both nations vied with each other in claiming as their own one whom both equally worshiped? Indeed, to such a pitch did the reverence for the holy daughter of Alfred the Great rise in England, that the people of that country, as well to escape the detested Norman rule as to live under a sovereign of their own race, migrated in large numbers into the lowlands of Scotland. From that time, this portion of Scotland became almost an English colony.

Margaret's influence was not confined to reforms in court manners and etiquette, or to providing for the needs of the poor. She also inspired her husband with the desire of benefiting his kingdom by means of commercial relations with all the more favored countries of Christendom. For this purpose, the young Scottish nobles were encouraged to travel abroad, that they might learn by observation what their own country lacked, and in what it might be benefited by the introduction of foreign institutions and customs and products. Foreigners were also offered every facility and encouragement for visiting Scotland, and found a ready and safe market there for their merchandise.

That such a woman proved as admirable a mother as she was a wife and ruler was to be expected. Her union with Malcolm was blessed with the birth of six sons and two daughters. The most learned and exemplary masters were called to assist her in forming the minds and hearts of these dear ones. They did but assist her, however; for to no person did she ever commit what she considered to be her own indispensable duty, — the care of forming these young souls by word and example, every day and hour, from their cradle till they had reached manhood or womanhood. Every lesson was given to them in the queen's presence; nor, sooth to say, would they enjoy any teaching which was not given beneath their mother's eye, so much did they love to be near her, so little could they brook even a short hour's separation from that loved voice and ever-sunny smile.

History has preserved to all future time the results of such an education in the revered names of her sons and daughters. Of

the latter, Matilda, or "The Good Queen Maud," married to Henry I. of England, was her mother's counterpart in beauty of person, sanctity of life, and devotion to all the best interests of her people; while Mary, the youngest, became the wife of Eustace, Count of Boulogne, and brought to her husband's home the graces with which her mother adorned the throne of Scotland. Of her sons, Edgar, Alexander, and David wore their father's crown, thanks to the unselfish efforts of their uncle, Edgar Atheling, who raised an English army to defend their right to the throne against the pretensions of Donald, Malcolm's oldest but illegitimate son. All three reigned happily; but David, canonized afterward like his mother, has ever been looked upon as Scotland's model king, and her patron, "St. David."

The beautiful life of his parent ended, as it had begun, in dark storm and bitter trial. In 1093 a war broke out with England; and Malcolm, with his two eldest sons, Edward and Edmund, crossed the border, and laid siege to Alnwick Castle. The queen meanwhile was lying dangerously ill at Edinburgh, her mind sadly disturbed by forebodings of disaster. Malcolm and Edward perished, it is said, through treachery; and their army fled in disorder across the frontier. When Edmund arrived with the fugitives, he learned that his mother was said to be dying. As the boy entered the sick-chamber, the queen, ignorant of the fate of her husband, was praying fervently for them, holding in her hands a crucifix, which she often pressed to her lips, and reciting with the assistants the verses of Ps. l. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of thy tender-mercies blot out my iniquity." On perceiving Edmund, her heart failed her. "How fares it with your father and brother?" said she feebly. He faintly stammered out, "Well." But she read his young face too well, and, holding the crucifix toward him, commanded him to tell the whole truth. "They are dead, mother, both dead," sobbed the poor lad. There was a moment of silence and unutterable agony, during which the bereaved wife and mother pressed the sacred sign of redemption convulsively to her breast, praying inwardly, with closed eyes and lips; then, with a mighty

effort, she kissed her crucifix, and, raising her streaming eyes to heaven, she exclaimed, "All praise be to thee, everlasting God, who hast given me to suffer this ere I die." She lingered four days longer, inspiring her children, and all who beheld her angelic countenance, — made still more beautiful by the light of approaching eternity, and the sweet smile that ever played upon it, — with something of the heavenly peace and serenity that filled her own soul.

Alas! in that dark hour there were found men in her kingdom who had brooked but ill her gentle spirit of piety and charitableness, and her husband's reforms and improvements. They were ready to raise the standard of rebellion in favor of Donald, even before their heroic queen had breathed her last. But Margaret's goodness had taken too deep a hold on the heart of the nation to allow it to help undo all that she had done for their true welfare. Donald's usurpation was fated to be but evanescent; and Margaret's sons were to bless Scotland with many glorious years.

Her son, King David I., erected a chapel in her honor in the castle of Edinburgh. Desecrated and ruined during the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was restored under the enlightened patronage of Queen Victoria; and in the stained glass windows of the chancel are portraits of Margaret herself, of Malcolm Canmore, and of their sainted son David, "the perfect exemplar of a good king." Margaret needed not this restoration to live for ever in history as one of those great women whose deeds point out to their sex through all time in what lies the secret of woman's greatness and undying power.

XXXIII.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

ENGLAND and Scotland claimed Margaret as their own; and likewise Elizabeth belongs to races as distinct in origin and language, and as antagonistic in their tendencies, as the Celt and the Saxon. She is "the dear Elizabeth," as well for the Germanic nations as for the isolated Hungarians standing to their arms in the conflict so long raging between Slav and Mohammedan. What, then, is it in her short life of twenty-four years, that has furnished so fertile a theme for panegyrist and poet and painter, for the serious historian's ever-growing admiration, as well as for the wildest flights of legend and romance? Simply this: she was an earnest lover of her Crucified Lord, as well as of her husband, children, and people. She was a true woman, seeking self in nothing, and seeking the good of others in her every aim and deed. Hers was the unselfish devotion of a pure and noble nature to the divine glory, identified in her thoughts with the best interests of humanity.

Like Margaret, Elizabeth was born (1207) in the royal palace of the Hungarian kings, being the daughter of Andrew II. and of Gertrude, a Carinthian princess. Although we possess the most authentic details on every thing pertaining to her career from first to last, the popular fancy, as is its wont, has cast around her birth a halo of miraculous legend. In the year 1206 took place in the Castle of Wartburg, the residence of Hermann, Landgrave (or Duke) of Thuringia, the famous contest between the six greatest poets, or minnesingers, in Ger-

many. As no one in the noble assemblage was able to decide between the gifted contestants, their claims were referred to the master of Klingsohr, renowned for his skill in astrology as well as in poetry; and, the deputation sent to him to announce this choice having demanded some proof of his surpassing knowledge, he predicted "the birth of a bright star in Hungary, whose radiance should illuminate the Wartburg, and thence shine over the whole earth."

Klingsohr went soon afterward to the Wartburg, where he composed the quarrel between the poets. The Landgrave Hermann, whether urged on by the predictions of the astrologer, or following the promptings of political sagacity, within a few years sent ambassadors to the King of Hungary to ask the hand of his infant daughter for the heir of Thuringia, Louis, a child a few years the elder of Elizabeth. The demand being favorably received, it was next requested that Elizabeth, then in her fourth year, should be sent forthwith to the court of Thuringia, there to be educated till she was of age to become the wife of Prince Louis. This, too, was granted, after some slight opposition from the queen; and the child left her father's halls, escorted by a magnificent train of ladies and nobles, Andrew sending, among other splendid presents, a cradle and a bath of pure silver and of exquisite Oriental workmanship.

The two children grew up, bound to each other by a love so tender and so pure, that even when they had been wedded, and ruled together the States of Thuringia, they addressed each other by the appellation of "brother" and "sister." Yet was it an ill-fortune for Elizabeth that willed her to be brought up in the Wartburg, instead of her own native halls. The young Thuringian ladies, who might have aspired to the hand of Louis, looked with no favor on the little stranger destined to be one day their sovereign; and their dislike or jealousy was shared by the Princess Agnes, sister to Louis, as well as by her mother, the Landgravine Sophia. The child's innate piety and extraordinary love for the poor was probably instilled, and certainly fostered, by the noble Bertha von Beindeleben, to whom Elizabeth had been most especially intrusted by King Andrew. But the

court of Thuringia was a gay and worldly court, evermore resounding with the love-songs of the minnesingers, and kept in perpetual excitement by "courts of love" and tournaments. The little Hungarian, though inheriting all the beauty of the race of Arpad, seemed to have no taste for courtly pleasures or pastimes. She never wearied of prayer and study, and was never so happy as when she was allowed to bestow her store of pocket-money on the poor, or take some share in giving them religious instruction. She was soon talked of and sneered at by Agnes and her attendant maidens as the "little nun." The extreme delight with which she waited on the sick in the hospitals, and parted with all that she deemed superfluous in favor of the needy, was characterized as meanness of spirit, unworthy alike of her royal birth and her future station. In all this, however, she was encouraged by the Landgrave Hermann, who foresaw, that, in the angelic child, his people should one day have a parent and protectress. But in 1216 Hermann died; and Louis, who now succeeded him, was detained at the imperial court, where he was completing his education beneath the eyes of the emperor.

Like his father, the young landgrave had never sided with her adversaries. On the contrary, he was deeply attached to her. He knew that Elizabeth loved him with her whole heart, and all the more truly for her exalted love of God and His poor. He could never brook to hear her ridiculed or slighted, while they were together, before his father's death. It was to him that she always came in her childish griefs, when the unfriendly looks she met with made the court of the Wartburg seem indeed any thing but her native home; and, with her head on his shoulder, she would soon forget the unkind looks and the unkinder words. He never returned from court without bringing her some little token of love; and she was ever the first whom he sought on crossing his father's threshold. When he came back to the Wartburg, after having completed his education, his family, his counselors and chief nobles, were unanimous in urging him to break off his engagement with the "little Beguine nun," as they contemptuously called Elizabeth, and to select for his wife the

daughter of some German prince, a woman of high spirit and queenly manners. He repelled the advice, but did not openly resent it. However, some involuntary acts of neglect toward his affianced occurring soon afterward, they were interpreted as meaning a serious estrangement; and Walther de Varila, to whom King Andrew had committed, in an especial manner, the charge of watching over his child in the Thuringian court, met Louis, one day, as he was returning from the chase, and begged him to declare what his intentions were with regard to the princess. The public voice, he said, was unanimous in affirming that the landgrave no longer loved Elizabeth, and that he entertained the thought of sending her back to Hungary. The conversation took place in an open field in full view of the Inselberg, the loftiest peak in Thuringia; and Louis, who was reposing on the greensward, sprung suddenly to his feet. "Seest thou," he exclaimed to the venerable knight, "yonder mountain? If that were of pure gold from base to summit, and offered to me on condition that I should part with my Elizabeth, I would never accept it. People may think and speak of her as they please: I have only to say that I love her, and prefer her to every thing on earth. I will have my Elizabeth." The overjoyed knight begged permission to repeat these words to his ward. "Tell her, also," replied the landgrave, "that I shall never hearken to any advice that would tend to separate us, and give her this as a fresh pledge of my troth." He thereupon took from his scrip a little silver mirror of curious workmanship, having on one side the figure of Christ crucified, and placed it in the hand of Varila. The latter, without a moment's delay, hastened to Elizabeth, who more than ever needed the presence of a friend and the sweet music of kind words. She listened with a deep and overflowing joy to his communication, thanked him for all his fatherly care of her during these long and trying years, took Louis' token from his hand, and, seeing the image of her heavenly love, she pressed it reverently to her lips, placed it next to her heart, and kept it there till her death. This was in 1220. As soon as she had completed her thirteenth year, she became the bride of Louis, amid the transports of popular joy.

The people, at least, had always appreciated the incomparable goodness, as well as the surpassing beauty, of their destined landgravine.

Louis of Thuringia instinctively felt that the destiny of his Elizabeth was to be for his nation a spring of healing waters, the center of a wide and lasting moral influence, the remembered exemplar of all private virtue and public excellence; and from the day of their bridals he made it his pride and his joy to unite himself to her in every plan conceived for the reform of their own court, and the benefiting of every household subject to them. The spirit of unbounded devotion to the sufferings and needs of the laboring classes animated every public act of the landgravine and her husband. He needed not her advice to insist upon a rigorous execution of the laws, and a repression of all lawlessness and tyranny in the dealings of his nobles with their vassals. No honor at court was shown to the heartless lord or master: no charge was intrusted to any but the merciful, the kind, and the spotless. At the slightest rumor of injustice or oppression in any district, the prince rode out at the head of his trusted retainers to redress the wrong. Still, the court of the Wartburg was not a dismal or joyless abode of asceticism. The penitential rigor practiced by the young sovereigns toward themselves, and their protracted prayers, were witnessed only by their own private apartments: the church offices obligatory on all were performed with a willing piety, in which all joined. But during the hours given to necessary recreation, the duties of hospitality, and the other functions inseparable from sovereign rank, nothing could exceed the cheerfulness and the gentle courtesy of Louis and his wife. Their contemporary, St. Francis of Assissi, was wont to say that "Courtesy is the twin-sister of Charity." Elizabeth and her husband proved the truth of this saying every day, and in every act of their lives.

In 1226, during the absence of Prince Louis in Italy, where he held a command under the Emperor Frederick II., a fearful famine prevailed in Germany. The poorer classes were reduced to such a plight, that they had to dig up wild roots, and to eat wild berries, in order to keep off death a little while. They fed

even on the flesh of beasts of burden that fell dead by the roadside. From every part of Thuringia, and even from beyond its borders, the famishing multitudes flocked to the Wartburg, where they verily believed the holy young landgravine could miraculously multiply her stores to feed them. At any rate, she soon emptied her magazines of all the corn, and other provisions, hoarded there, and spent the then enormous sum of sixty-nine thousand gold florins in purchasing provisions wherever they could be obtained.

While the famine lasted, beside the centers of relief established by her throughout her domains, she daily fed nine hundred persons at the Wartburg. It was situated on a craggy eminence; and, the sick and lame being unable to go up to the castle-gates, she was wont to come down daily with her attendants, bearing what they had spared from their own table to the crowd of sufferers. She had erected a hospital half-way up the road to the castle; and there she received the most loathsome cases of disease, reserving to herself to wait on them. Two other hospitals — one for women only, and a second for both sexes indiscriminately — were opened in the neighboring city of Eisenach. Twice every day, unfailingly, did Elizabeth and her maidens descend, on foot, the long, steep slopes of the Wartburg to minister to these sick, as well as to the poor. Nor did she spare herself in this service. The most loathsome patients were those to whom she went in preference; and to no one of her attendants would she commit the care of nursing them. She made their beds with her own hands, and with her own hands washed and dressed their sores, unrepelled by the most frightful ulcers; and all the while, her whole person shone with a light and a joy that were not of earth. For, in every one of these poor outcasts, she beheld the person of her Crucified Lord; and in every wound she dressed she contemplated his sufferings. No wonder, then, that infinite reverence and tenderness marked her words, her acts, her whole bearing, while ministering at every bedside.

When the landgrave returned, he was greeted by a chorus of benedictions from the people, who crowded around him on his progress homeward, and by a concert of complaints from his

ministers and nobles, who accused the landgravine of emptying the treasury, and reducing the country to bankruptcy by her reckless extravagance. "Tell me," he replied, "that my dear wife is well, and I shall be grateful to you. I care for nothing else. Allow my little Elizabeth to give away in charities all she can, provided that I am left with the Wartburg, Eisenach, and Naumburg. God will take care to restore us all the rest. Almsgiving ruins nobody." Hastening homeward, he met the landgravine, clasped her to his heart amid her tears of joy and thanksgiving, and "Tell me, my sister," he said, "what has become of our poor people during these dreadful times?" She answered sweetly, "I have given to God all that was His; and he has kept us what was thine and mine."

Why complain that this young life, fruitful in such deeds as these, was shortened or wasted away by the long prayers, the midnight vigils, and the penitential austerities performed in private, beneath the eye of God and his angels? There are so many long lives, among the high-born and the wealthy, spent in the sole pursuit of pleasure or vanity, in the utter forgetfulness of the surrounding poor, and of the coming judgment of God upon the hardhearted, — leave us to worship, wheresoever we meet them, these short-lived heroines of charity: there is, alas! too little danger that their number shall increase beyond measure among us, or that the example of their self-sacrifice shall become contagious.

Sophia, the dowager landgravine, was still living, and still looked with no loving eye upon her daughter-in-law. She neither shared nor approved Elizabeth's charities and merciful ministrations. In her son, however, she found no sympathy. Yet one account shows how even his kind heart was overtasked. One day, a child afflicted with leprosy was brought to the hospital on the Wartburg; but his state was such, that even the most courageous attendants in the institution would neither touch him, nor admit him. Elizabeth, coming at her usual hour, no sooner beheld the little sufferer lying helpless and forsaken at the gate, than she took him up in her arms, carried him to the castle, and placed him in her own bed. Sophia, indignant, flew to the

landgrave. "My son," she burst forth, "come with me instantly, and see with whom your wife shares your bed;" and she led him to his chamber, relating in exaggerated language the extraordinary occurrence that seemed to crown all the mad acts of his wife's charity. The landgrave, though he said not one word, could scarcely conceal his irritation and loathing. He snatched the coverlet from the bed, "and, lo! instead of the leper, there lay an infant, surrounded with a halo of light, and bearing the features of the new-born babe of Bethlehem. While they gazed at the apparition in mute astonishment, the radiant infant smiled on them, and disappeared."

You ask, "But how could this young creature be the devoted wife and mother, while her whole soul and time are thus engrossed by the care of the poor, and the long hours spent in devotional exercises?" That she was the tenderest and most loving of wives, Louis himself was ever wont to proclaim with a rapture that bespoke the depth of his conviction. In truth, nothing could be more touching than her absolute dependence on him. His every look and word seemed to light up her features with a glow of unspeakable bliss. When public duty compelled him to be absent, the very sun of her life seemed to be quenched; and she sought to forget her misery by spending a longer time in praying for his safety, by increasing her private austerities in order to propitiate the divine goodness toward him, and by performing her visits to the poor with greater assiduity and fervor, giving him the chief share in any merit she might thereby acquire before the Divine Majesty.

Three children came in succession, before 1226, to crown this rare and exalted affection that bound their young souls together in every holy aim and godlike deed. These years are still celebrated as the short golden age of Thuringia; the central figure in the picture that remained so long impressed on the popular mind being that young mother, apparently still in her early girlhood, bringing her three babes daily to some favorite altar, and resembling, as she stood with them amid some throng of her worshiping subjects, an angel in human form accompanied by cherubs. As she was the tenderest of wives, so was she the most doating of

mothers. Every one of her babes was to her a blessing beyond all price, a most sacred deposit that she was to guard, and whose worth she was bound to increase hourly till she was called to account by the Giver. Her fourth child was born after its father's departure in that same year, 1226, for the fifth crusade.

An accident revealed to Elizabeth the fact of her husband's having "taken up the cross." He had concealed the badge carefully in the scrip or large purse it was then customary to carry at one's girdle. She had exhausted her own purse, as usual; and, as she playfully opened her husband's to find money for some fresh petitioner for charity, she drew forth "the cross." It was too much for her, and she swooned away by his side. The parting was a sad one, saddest of all for the young husband, tearing himself away from such a wife and his lovely children to face unknown perils on land and sea. They took her, all unconscious, from his embrace, and carried her thus to the Wartburg. On Sept. 11, 1227, Louis lay dying of malarial fever on the beach of Otranto, surrounded by his weeping nobles, who swore to him to return home, and defend his wife and little children. His fourth infant, Gertrude, it was never given him to see. But he died, as he had lived, the worthy husband of Elizabeth, a spotless and heroic knight in a chivalrous age.

The news of this bereavement won the young landgravine, widowed in her twentieth year, the heart of her mother-in-law. The latter did violence to her own feelings in order to break the dreadful tidings to Elizabeth. She bade her not be cast down by what had just befallen her son, who had only gone abroad in compliance with the Divine Will. As she spoke with great apparent composure, Elizabeth understood that her husband had been made prisoner. "If my brother is in captivity," she said, "our friends and my father will soon help restore him to liberty." But when Sophia gave her daughter the ring sent her by Louis, and pronounced the terrible words, "He is dead," Elizabeth, after a few moments of silent and tearless agony, could only gasp out, "Oh, my Lord and my God! the whole world is now dead to me, — the whole world with all that it has of delights." Then, rising up, frantic with grief, she ran through the castle, shrieking, "He

is dead, he is dead!" She was stopped by a wall, and cast herself against it, weeping uncontrollably. Her mother in-law and ladies in waiting took her gently away, and tried with kind words to comfort her. But she heard them not, and continued to pour forth her grief in broken sentences. "I have lost all in thee, all, all in thee!" she would repeat. "O my beloved brother! O friend of my heart! O my gentle and pious husband! thou art taken from me, and have left me in utter woe."

It was indeed utter woe, although still further sorrow was at hand. The evil-minded brothers of Louis usurped his throne, and cast forth his widow and his heirs. A few days had scarcely elapsed, when, in spite of the heroic resistance of her mother-in-law, Elizabeth and her four babes were thrust violently forth from the Castle of Wartburg, and descended on foot the steep hill that led to Eisenach. In that city where she had built hospitals for every form of disease and wretchedness, where she had lavished her charities and the sublime examples of her own devotion to the poor of Christ, not a house would shelter her, not a hand was stretched out to sustain, relieve, or defend her. With her infant folded to her breast, and her three elder children borne by the two women who persisted in sharing her lot, she bethought her, as she wandered helplessly through the inhospitable streets, of that other Mother, who came at midnight to Bethlehem, and found every door and heart closed against her. She literally had to spend the night beneath a shed from which the swine were driven forth to make place for the sovereign lady of Thuringia, the royal Princess of Hungary.

At midnight she heard the bell of the neighboring convent of Franciscans tolling for the office of matins. She had founded the establishment, and, rising forthwith, she went to the church, joined in singing the psalms of the office, and then besought the brotherhood to sing, in her name, the Te Deum, in thanksgiving for His having associated herself and her babes with the sufferings of the infant Redeemer. Never, since in Milan, at Eastertide 387, that glorious hymn was first sung by its authors, Ambrose and Augustine, were its sublime accents echoed from a purer heart. Monica then wept tears of joy, for the long winter

of her soul was over: Elizabeth exulted, as she sang and wept, that, after her springtide of conjugal happiness, her dark years of suffering had just begun.

The spirit that filled her soul with light and joy in that midnight hour never forsook her during the four ensuing years. When the remains of her adored husband were brought back from the bleak Italian shore on which he expired, the hearts of his people were smitten with shame and remorse at the thought of the foul wrong they had permitted to be done to his widow, — to her whom they were wont to acclaim as their "mother," — as well as to her disinherited orphans. The flower of the whole German nobility and clergy accompanied the hearse that bore the body of one who had lived a blameless and heroic life, and had died on his way to Palestine. Elizabeth and her children went as far as Bamberg to meet the martial procession, that resembled a triumphal progress much more than a funeral pomp. When she was permitted to approach the coffin, the multitude of noble knights who beheld the heavenly beauty of the widow and mother, as she clung to all that was left of her heart's treasure, kissing it again and again, were moved to tears. "I thank thee, my God," she exclaimed with a firm voice, "for having granted my ardent prayer, in giving me to behold once more my beloved, who was also thine. . . . He had given himself to thee, and I had ratified the gift, for the defense of thy Holy Land; and I do not regret the sacrifice, though it hath cost me one as dear as my own soul. . . . Thou knowest, Lord, that I could have lived in poverty with him all my life, he and I the poorest of the poor; and that I would have begged from door to door through the whole earth, only to be with him. . . . But now I would not, even if I could, give one hair of my head to bring him back to life, were it not in conformity with thy will."

The Thuringian nobles who had sworn to their dying sovereign to protect his widow and orphans were not slow to upbraid his brothers with their usurpation and their cruelty. The public opinion of Germany sustained them in their advocacy of the cause of the widow and her orphans; and Thuringia, with united voice, demanded that justice should be done.

Elizabeth and her children saw the Wartburg again. She had been most energetic in asserting and urging the claims of her dear ones. But once her boy, Hermann, was in possession of his sovereignty, her interest in all earthly things seemed to die within her. Her heart was buried with the companion of her childhood, the husband lost so early, and whom she loved with the united tenderness of wife and sister. The lordly oak to which the young vine had been wedded was laid low by the axe of the woodman; and the fruitful vine lay prostrate with it, never again to soar, never again to hang its fragrant arms or rich golden clusters on any other tree.

Two of her descendants, called, after her, "Elizabeth," are especially dear to Americans: the one is that great queen who sent Columbus to discover a new world, — great alike in her generous queenly qualities, and in the sweet womanly virtues that graced her private life; and the other, greater still in personal sanctity, Elizabeth, queen and patron-saint of Portugal, the ancestress of the illustrious princes who promoted the discovery of the East Indies, as well as of those who have founded and governed the vast empire of Brazil.

To each of these noble women — wives, mother, and sovereigns all of them — may well be applied the lines of Chaucer on Constance, which we should be proud to apply to our mothers and sisters: —

> "In her is high beauty withouten pride,
> Youth withouten greenhead or folly;
> To all her workes Virtue is her guide;
> Humbleness hath slayen in her tyrannie:
> She is mirrour of all courtesie;
> Her heart is very chamber of holiness,
> Her hand minister of freedom for almesse."

XXXIV.

St. Teresa.

HEROISM in the practice of all the higher virtues is not an exclusive attribute of Christian womanhood in any one land. It is universal, like the vital warmth of the sun, which shows its effects in every clime to which his rays penetrate. Iceland, in the extreme north of Christendom, had its sainted women before the sixteenth century, as well as Spain and Portugal at the south. That century, however, was remarkable in Spain for the many saintly men and women whose names have been since deservedly cherished as the benefactors alike of both hemispheres.

St. Teresa is called, in Gregory XV.'s bull of canonization, "the Foundress of the Order of Barefooted Carmelites." She is perhaps more accurately to be styled its *Reformer*. This order is claimed by its own members to be a very early association of Christian men and women who lived amid the mountain solitudes of Carmel in Palestine, pretty much as did their contemporaries in Egypt and various parts of Asia. It is not unlikely that some of these communities remained undisturbed under the Saracenic conquerors of Palestine. At any rate, in the twelfth century, the ruins of several large monastic establishments were found near the traditional caverns pointed out as the refuge of the prophets Elias and Elisæus; and, in the beginning of the next century, this spot became the abode of numerous hermits, who were organized into a monastic body by St. Albert, patriarch or bishop of Jerusalem. He drew up a rule for their government in 1209. Thenceforth their number increased, and spread to the countries

of Western Europe, where they were held in great veneration for their austerity and saintly lives.

In Spain, where they were regarded with especial favor, constant warfare with the Moors, the enemies of the Christian name, contributed to maintain fervor in the cloister as it helped to feed piety in the family. Fervor in religious bodies means a loving, prompt, enthusiastic spirit of self-sacrifice, or, at least, of self-denial. This is the vital sap, without which the tree ceases to bear fruit, and must decay and perish. It declined in Spain, when the national spirit grew fainter, after the subjugation of the Moors. To restore that pristine spirit Teresa was called.

She was born at Avila in Castile, March 28, 1515. Both her parents — Alfonso Sanchez de Cepeda, and Beatrix de Avila y Ahumada — were of ancient and illustrious lineage. Teresa was the sixth of twelve children, — three sons and nine daughters; two of the number being from a former marriage. She was called, after her mother, "Teresa de Ahumada," till August, 1562, when she assumed the name of "Teresa de Jesus," on pronouncing the solemn vows of her religious profession as a member of her own community of Reformed Carmelites. She was the favorite of the whole family. Among her brothers, Rodrigo was especially dear to her. He was a few years older than Teresa, and thereby fitted to be her companion and playmate. "He and I," she says, "would often read together the lives of the saints; and, while we therein learned by what cruel deaths these holy personages bore a loving witness to Christ, I could not help thinking that they thereby purchased at a very low price the bliss of heaven and the everlasting possession of God. Hence a great desire arose in me of dying in some like manner, not so much from a vehement love of God, as from a wish of sharing, through the endurance of short-lived tortures, the incomparable happiness laid up in heaven. My little brother and I often met to discuss how we might best compass this our purpose. We agreed to pass over into the country of the Moors, begging our bread for God's sake, on the way, and hoping, once we were there, to have our heads cut off. Indeed, so far as I can now judge of it, our Lord inspired us even then, tender in years as

we were, with sufficient courage to have carried out our purpose, had we been allowed to have our own way. But our parents were still living; and this rendered the thing impracticable."

The two children had set out secretly one day, but were met near Avila by one of their uncles, who brought them back to the parental roof. There, despairing of the martyr's palm, they set about leading such a life as they read of the hermits in Egypt and Palestine. They began to build cells in the grounds attached to their home; but the walls reared by their childish hands crumbled as fast as they could raise them.

This early piety began to wane after the mother's death, and while Teresa was yet in her twelfth year. The change was occasioned by her chancing to find among her mother's books some productions of the after-growth of the literature of Spanish chivalry. At this age, too, the companionship of some young relatives of her own helped to develop in Teresa a fondness for admiration and pleasure. The change in her dress and deportment was noticed by her father, a man of enlightened piety. She only needed the first warnings of his love to become conscious of her danger. The books were discarded, and wiser companions selected. In her eighteenth year she was allowed to become an inmate of the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation at Avila; and in her twentieth year she pronounced the vows of her religious profession. Among the high-born ladies composing the sisterhood, in an age when the spirit of the world invaded the cloister, there was but too much that was opposed to that constant seeking after spiritual perfection, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, without which the religious soul only drags a heavy chain along a path that does not lead to heaven. The pristine fervor of the Carmelites, like that of all such institutions in their beginnings, was a precious perfume treasured up in choice vessels. It had to be kept jealously closed up; for, if the containing vases are left open, the ethereal fragrance will soon waste itself on the free atmosphere around. The world — the world of high rank, and wealth and fashion — had given its darlings to the cloister; but it exacted as a privilege, or a natural right, that it should not be cut off from all intercourse with them.

Fathers, brothers, and other near relatives, would insist on seeing the dear ones at least in the convent-parlor; mothers and sisters would claim the further privilege of penetrating into the interior of the religious home. Thus, by imperceptible degrees, the strong wall which the founders of monastic orders had raised to keep out the world was broken down, or rendered useless. Teresa de Ahumada had sought the retirement of the cloister in obedience to the voice that bade her unceasingly to walk in the perfect way. But the world, without her wishing it, and sorely against her will, had found its way to her cell. She struggled against the downward tendencies of the majority among the sisterhood, as well as against the enervating influences of the throng of worldly visitors. But it cannot surprise us, if the sluggishness of the pervading atmosphere ended by paralyzing her sincere and ardent efforts toward a higher spirituality.

The Master, whose instrument she was to be in effecting a change in these degenerate communities, prepared that chosen soul by an ordeal so terrible, that the reading of it must move the most insensible.

She had been a martyr to infirmities of various kinds previous to her first religious profession in November, 1534. But from that event, her violent spasms of the heart became so frequent, and were attended with swoons so deathlike, that her life seemed to hang by the merest thread. Then came a dreadful hectic fever, with excruciating pains in every limb and nerve. The nervous fits grew so intense that the poor sufferer's sinews shrank up, and her limbs were so crippled that she never completely recovered the use of them. In August, 1537, came a crisis, apparently fatal: for four entire days she lay in so deep a lethargy, that all except her father believed her dead. Every preparation was made for her burial; and her grave was dug in the Monastery of the Incarnation, to which she belonged. Her noble parent, however, who had some time before caused her to be removed to his own house, would not quit her side a moment, holding her cold, pulseless hand in his own, and praying with a quiet heroism for the recovery of his child. Many preternatural signs, it is said, had been given to him of the high purpose to which she

was destined; and the instincts of his own exalted piety led him to hope that his favorite daughter should be a shining light, leading others on to new paths of sanctity and Christian perfection.

Teresa returned to life, but not to health or strength for long years afterward. Nevertheless, throughout the varied and successive agonies of these interminable years, her patience, her outward cheerfulness, and brightness of temper, never for one moment forsook her. The same sweet smile that won her all hearts played around her wasted features; and her graceful wit and beautiful fancy would ever flash forth when she could speak at all. To all who beheld her, she spoke as if she were the happiest of mortal beings, on her bridal-bed of the cross, united in suffering with her Lord and Love. He, too, seemed to visit that generous soul with rare favors, — lights that disclosed to her the mysteries of the divine economy, an irresistible attraction towards meditating on the infinite grandeur and goodness of God, on the condescension of the Son in assuming our nature, on the sweet story of his birth and early life, and, above all, on his sufferings and death. The young invalid devoted head and heart to the perpetual study of the Crucified, and uninterrupted converse with him in prayer.

Urged by the spirit of Christ, who was thus fashioning her soul in the furnace, Teresa besought her father to have her taken back to the monastery as soon as she could bear to be carried thither. His death not long afterward, the inflamed words of exhortation addressed to her on his death-bed, and her reading of how St. Augustine was suddenly converted by hearing of the great deeds of St. Anthony, overcame Teresa's last hesitations. She placed herself, without reserve and for ever, in the Divine Hand for all its gracious purposes, and determined to devote her life to the spiritual regeneration and elevation of her order.

Her first establishment for reformed Carmelite nuns was opened at Avila, Aug. 24, 1562. The project met with incredible obstacles. The approval wrung from the citizens of Avila by the acknowledged virtues of Teresa and her counselors, as well as by the angelic lives of herself and her nuns, was soon changed into a furious persecution. The Monastery of the In-

carnation, of which she had till then been a member, was filled with the daughters of the best families in the city and province: these conceived the secession of Teresa, and the radical changes made by her, as a direct censure of their own laxity and worldliness. The world, too, of which their relatives and friends were a portion, took sides with the murmurers; and this world of wealth and fashion had as auxiliaries the great body of male and female Carmelites in Spain and throughout Europe. Nevertheless, the reform spread, because the lives of Teresa and her little flock at St. Joseph of Avila were so edifying and offered so perfect an idea of what should be the true followers of the cross. The ideal of spiritual chivalry in serving the Divine Majesty had not so far faded in the minds and homes of Spain's nobility, but that their daughters could discern who were more Christlike, — Teresa and her companions, or the enervated communities from which they had separated. So the noblest, the purest, the best, of Spanish maidenhood, were fain to cast their lot with the persecuted; and, despite the furious opposition made by those who should have promoted the reform, it soon came to have monasteries in the chief cities of Castile.

The rule which she drew up for them prescribed that their sole purpose should be to sanctify themselves by a life of rigorous poverty, perpetual fasting and abstinence, strictest seclusion and frequent prayer, in order to obtain from the Divine Majesty the spread of his kingdom on earth, the conversion of unbelievers and sinners, and the healing-up of the divisions which brought disgrace on the Christian name. The exceeding austerity of the reformed Carmelite rule, and the purity of soul it was calculated to foster, were intended to make the sisterhood more acceptable in the Divine Presence.

But Teresa felt instinctively that her success was only a very partial one, so long as her reform did not reach the Carmelite monks, or, as they were called in England, "Whitefriars." In 1568 she met at Medina del Campo a young Carmelite called Juan de Yepez, since widely revered as "St. John of the Cross." He had just received priest's orders, and was full of the spirit of God. He and one of his brethren, Antonio de Heredia, entered

with enthusiasm into Teresa's plans. A wretchedly poor farm-house was offered her in the little hamlet of Durvel, on the high-road between Medina and Valladolid. There Juan and Antonio laid the foundations of their reform, aiming at bringing back monastic life to a close imitation of the poverty of Christ; and on Nov. 28, 1568, just as winter was setting in amid this mountainous region, they bound themselves by the solemn engagements of their apostolic career. People flocked to behold with wonder such utter destitution of all earthly comforts: they listened to the gospel expounded by men whose lives were its most eloquent commentary; they believed readily that the God of the poor was with those who had left all to follow him. Of course, planted in such piety and nourished with such devotion, the community of Durvel grew in fame and in numbers, and became the parent of many monasteries, revered far and near for the godlike virtues and deeds of their inmates.

Thus the work of God prospered in spite of opposition and persecution. Again and again Teresa was forbidden to prosecute her reforms; and her monasteries were threatened with destruction. But, as she had the cordial support of the highest authority in the Church, she was content to bend momentarily before the storm, knowing well it would soon blow over, and that all would soon be well once more. John of the Cross, too, was reviled, denounced, condemned, and imprisoned like a malefactor; but the supreme authority was never slow in vindicating his innocence, and sanctioning his godly deeds.

Besides her exhausting labors in the organization of religious communities, Teresa produced numerous and peculiar writings, — "The Road to Perfection," "The Castle of the Soul," and many others of an exalted mysticism. The style is considered to be most beautiful, and the writings most helpful to those seeking the higher spiritual life.

When Teresa died at Alba, Oct. 4, 1582, she had already founded thirty-two monasteries of her order, of which seventeen were for women, and fifteen for men, — a prodigious success, when one reflects on the preternatural austerity that characterized the lives of the members, and of the formidable obstacles

placed in the way of each successive foundation. After her death, the progress of her reform was not stayed. John of the Cross, when he closed his saintly life in December, 1591, beheld the total number of houses increased to seventy-eight.

One and the same spirit evidently guided these two great souls in their arduous undertakings, as well as in their interior lives; the spirit of Christ filling them with the same absorbing love of souls, — of souls laboring under sin, or ignorance of divine things. It also stamped on both the seal of suffering, and gave them an insatiate thirst for enduring more in order to be more like their crucified Lord. What more divinely intoxicating than this love of the Crucified and the cross? It was this that made Teresa exclaim, in the midst of her long tortures, "Lord, let me suffer, or let me die;" and John, when asked by the Master what reward he would choose, "None, Lord, save to suffer, and to be despised, for thy sake."

It is not surprising that from this exalted and unselfish love of the God of Calvary should spring in Teresa that charity towards others, — no matter how depraved in themselves, or hostile to her, — which could brook no deed, no word, no secret thought, that was not most kindly and most loving. So lofty was her estimate of our human nature deified in Christ, that she was ever ready to sacrifice rest, health, life, every thing, for the lowliest and most abandoned of human kind.

What a single woman — always sickly, suffering, slandered, opposed, and persecuted — did succeed in effecting is simply marvelous: what she might have accomplished, had the spirit of God ruled the counsels of those among whom her lot was cast, it were idle to inquire here. The Church has set the seal of its highest approbation on her life, her labors, her heroic virtues, as well as on her many precious and exquisitely beautiful writings. No woman since the days of the apostles has surpassed, or even approached, Teresa in gifts of intellect or greatness of heart, in mighty things achieved for pure religion and charity, or in the sweet womanly graces of a gentleness that no protracted tortures of soul or body could ruffle, and of a tender, all-embracing love that did not even exclude the most wicked.

XXXV.

American Saints.

"MY Love is crucified"—*Amor meus crucifixus est*—gives the keynote of the Christian Canticle of canticles, the song of heroic love begun on Calvary by Mary Magdalene, and continued through every succeeding age by the devoted followers of the Crucified. A draught from the passion-cup intoxicated the souls of Teresa de Ahumada and Juan de Yepez, inspiring them to undertake, and enabling them to accomplish, what appeared, humanly speaking, impossible. It was the same divine intoxication that sent to Peru their contemporaries, St. Toribio of Lima and St. Francis Solano, as well as the blessed Peter Claver to the slave populations of New Granada, while it urged the heroic missionaries of New France to court superhuman danger and suffering in the vast forest wastes drained by the St. Lawrence, the Ohio, and the Mississippi. This chivalrous spirit animated the women whose names close our roll of heroines, and who left their native France to rival the first apostles of our country in daring, fortitude, and achievement.

But in the two women of South America, who were the first native flowers of acknowledged sanctity in the crown of American womanhood, the love of Christ crucified manifested itself under a far different aspect. The assiduous study of his sufferings begot in Rose of Lima, and her kinswoman, Maria Anna de Paredes, "the Lily of Quito," an irresistible ardor of self-crucifixion, that they might the better resemble Him, who, "having loved his own who were in the world, . . . loved them unto the

end;" that is, to the utmost and inconceivable extremity of self-sacrifice. We shall see that there was in all these forms under which Christian heroism showed itself a providential purpose, a most timely adaptation to the special needs of the respective countries and epochs.

1. Four years after St. Teresa had closed her career of suffering and labor, was born in Lima that Rose, whose heavenly fragrance filled in her lifetime all South America, and every land in which the Spanish tongue was spoken. Her parents, Gaspar Flores and Maria Oliva, were both of noble birth, and blessed with twelve children. They had come to America with the hope of improving their fortunes; but the golden age of the Pizarros had long passed away, and, for the majority of European settlers, the only sure prospect of wealth lay in steady labor and industry. To the possession of wealth, however, Gaspar Flores never attained, while the care of his numerous family compelled him to the strictest economy. The subject of this sketch was named Isabel in baptism, after her godmother and maternal aunt, the Doña Isabel de Herrera; but the child's beauty was so marvelous, as she emerged from infancy, that they began to call her Rose; and this name, to the aunt's great indignation, finally superseded the other. Indeed, it became the occasion of the first domestic suffering that the child had to endure. Isabel de Herrera took it as a personal slight that her godchild should be called by any other than her baptismal name, impressed upon the tender conscience and prematurely quick mind of the little maid that it was a sin to permit herself to be named Rose, and showed her displeasure in more than one painful way. The mother, who, as well as the child's other parent, was of violent temper, did not hesitate to chastise her little daughter severely each time that she called herself, or permitted herself to be called, Isabel. At any rate, the name of Rose, imposed on her by this cruel baptism of blows, tears, and bitterness, was prophetic of her after-life.

Nor was it outward loveliness and grace of form that alone distinguished Rose as she grew up in Pizarro's queenly city, on the banks of the fast-flowing Rimac, and amid the perpetual

spring-tide of her native valley. Her soul, like those of Samuel and Jeremias, of Agnes and Teresa, was visited in childhood by the light of God's countenance, and the whispering of his mysterious voice, inviting her to heavenly bridals. The Spirit that spake of old to the patriarchs and prophets did not cease to commune with the children of men after the Eternal Word became flesh, and dwelt among them; and surely, if ever since the descent of the Comforter on the disciples in the Upper Chamber, there was need of a more sensible outpouring of his gifts, it was when the discoveries of Vasco de Gama and Christopher Columbus threw open two worlds to the apostolic zeal of Christendom.

History has justly stigmatized as unchristian and inhuman the spirit that animated so many of those who followed to our continent the great and good man to whom we owe its rediscovery in 1492. They sought nothing but gold and empire; and the governments that ruled at Lisbon and Madrid seconded but too well these greedy and ambitious adventurers. It remains for ever on record that the Christian statesmanship of Columbus and such men as Bartolomé de Las Casas, was set aside for the jealous, despotic, and grasping policy that authorized the enslavement of the native populations of America, that forbade the exportation of every thing beside the precious metals, that for centuries discountenanced native commerce, agriculture, and industry, and thereby rendered all local enterprise and social progress impossible. The native races, instead of being elevated by the rule of their new masters, sank and melted away beneath the intolerable hardships of the mines, or settled down into sullen despair or incurable drunkenness.

While Toribio of Lima communicated to his brother bishops the spirit of unbounded devotion to the interests of the natives that filled his own soul, while he perpetually journeyed on foot through every portion of the vast field intrusted to his zeal, he also multiplied in the cities seminaries for the education of a truly apostolic priesthood, colleges for higher education, and elementary schools in every parish and mission for the children of the people of all races. He felt instinctively, that, among the

associations of religious women, those destined to hospital service or education were to be especially encouraged. Rose was born during his administration of the see of Lima; and, under his fostering care, she grew up to be the wonder and edification of her native city and the surrounding provinces. The holy archbishop, who was himself a passionate lover of the cross, and exercised in his private life and public conduct the practice of the most austere poverty and self-denial, understood from the beginning whither led the spirit that guided Rose. Like the child Samuel, like Monica and Elisabeth of Hungary, her heart dwelt from infancy in the house of God: her delight was to be there, absorbed in prayer, or helping to contribute to its beauty. Not that only; but even thus early she yearned to be more and more like her Lord and Love in garb and in suffering. Hence her childish fondness for the poorest and homeliest raiment, and for food of the commonest and most insipid kind.

The child's extraordinary beauty excited in her worldly-minded mother a fond and not unnatural hope of seeing her wedded to the noblest and highest; but she was annoyed beyond measure by what she deemed the little maid's mopishness and nun-like ways. Every pains was taken to thwart her preference for retirement, prayer, and penitential austerities, as well as to throw her into such companionship as might best inspire her with a love for worldly rank and pleasures. The violence done to her inclinations did not always stop at the means accessible to lawful parental authority. She was often treated most cruelly; and this sort of domestic persecution became all the more intolerable as Rose was approaching womanhood.

Her beauty and her goodness, much more than her noble birth, had made her a favorite with the Spanish population, while a thousand acts of kindness and charity had endeared her still more to the down-trodden natives. They fairly worshiped the bright and noble Spanish maiden as a being superior to humanity. Of course her company was eagerly sought for in the highest society, and thither her fond mother would have her go perforce. One trait will paint Rose at this period of her life, and enable us to understand what is apparently most unnatural and incomprehen-

sible in her maturer years. It was then, even more than at present, the custom for her townswomen to wear garlands of flowers on all festive occasions. As Rose could not make herself singular, she managed to wear concealed beneath the flowers a circlet of silver, studded inside with points so sharp and long, that they sank deep into the flesh. Thus while she shone among her young companions, admired for her superior beauty, and loved for the gentle graces inseparable from superior goodness, none suspected the torture that the charming girl endured.

She was eagerly sought after in marriage, as was to be expected, by the first men in the land; but, to her parents' grief and dismay, every suitor was rejected. Arguments, reproaches, threats, and unseemly violence alike failed to shake Rose's determination to be the spouse of the Crucified. She was allowed at length to have her own way, chiefly through the influence of Lima's saintly archbishop, Toribio. There were in America, even then, convents of St. Teresa's reformed Carmelites; and Rose was offered free admission to one of them, even without the dowry which the narrow circumstances of her father could not allow him to give. She refused, because her own humility made her regard herself as unworthy of such a high calling. Every attempt made to lead her to join other cloistered communities proved unavailing: the interior voice warned her away from a mode of life that was not fitted for her. It was a wonderful dispensation of Providence. Her father fell ill, and poverty and destitution fell on his numerous family. Rose's place was to be near him in his extremity; she it was, whose labor was to be the main-stay of the household, and whose ingenious and incomparable tenderness was to brighten the deep darkness that had come down on her loved ones.

She was permitted, under the appellation of Rose of St. Mary, to consecrate herself to God by the three ordinary monastic vows, but to remain within her father's house, ministering to him and his, and sanctifying herself by the discharge of the sweet domestic charities, that are never so much needed as in the hour of misfortune. To these virtues of home-life she added the constant practice of ever-increasing self-inflictions, and a marvelous charity

toward all persons beyond her home who were most distressed in body or spirit.

That young life closed Aug. 24, 1617, in Rose's thirty-first year. Our brief space will barely allow us to point out a few among the many admirable things that crowd these pregnant years. She obtained from her father permission to occupy a sort of summer-house in his garden, where she could pray and labor alone beneath the All-seeing Eye, and practice, unseen of men, the bodily austerities which gave her the comfort of suffering with her Lord. During the three last years of her life, she consented, at the earnest and repeated solicitation of her noble benefactor and kinsman, Don Gonzalez de la Massa, to make his house her chief abode, on the condition that he would provide her there with a similar retreat, and that she should be free to visit and cheer her dear parents whenever she chose. Beneath her father's roof, one who could see the amount of labor she performed to relieve the needs of her sick parent and his children, would have thought she had never bestowed through the day a single hour on devotional exercises. Like St. Teresa, she was most skilled in embroidery and all manner of needle-work. Whatever she touched was highly prized, not only because of its own exquisite excellence, but because it was the work of a saint; and thus her labor yielded a bountiful and most welcome return. During her father's long illness, she would permit no one to attend him but herself, rendering him every menial service with a silent and joyful diligence, that showed how deeply she loved and reverenced him. So was it when her mother, or any other member of the family, sickened: they would have none but Rose to wait on them; for it was their belief that the very touch of her hands brought healing with it, that her very presence dispelled sadness, temptation, and every evil influence. Throughout the whole city, wherever there was disease, distress, or death, they would have Rose as a comforter or savior. She was known as God's angel wherever there was need of consolation, — in the dwellings of proud Spaniards as well as in the lowly huts of the Indians. These latter affirmed, nor need we marvel at it, that light shone from her pale emaciated features, and a fra-

grance not of earth was diffused by her poor garments as often as she visited their squalid dwellings. She did more: she sought out among the young maidens of her own class all whom poverty exposed to temptation, and gave them a refuge in her mother's home, working far into the night to support them, and bringing meanwhile their souls closer to God. Did pestilence visit the city, or did she hear of any extraordinary case of loathsome disease, then every thing else was forgotten, for the time being, in the sole occupation of ministering to the sufferers. During these years of ceaseless activity that heroic soul was tried by interior temptations, by long and persistent periods of spiritual darkness, unillumined by a single ray of divine light. Her endeavor the while had been to become more Christ-like in suffering; but, when her agony was greatest, she could say to him from her cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

What wonder, that, when the end came, her parents should be the first to kneel and kiss these unwearied hands and feet, that had borne peace and comfort to so many homes far and near? They knew then that she had "chosen the better part," and more glorious bridals than they had contemplated for her. All Lima poured in to the lowly home, where lay, most beautiful to behold, and redolent of heavenly sweetness, the fairest flower of all Peru and all America. Night and day they kept watch around the virginal body, as if they could not bear to have it buried away from their sight, — these poor "children of the sun," so easily made true children of God, if every Spanish man and woman in the land had inherited the spirit of St. Rose of Lima!

In the Convent of Santo Domingo in that city is an altar surmounted by a beautiful marble group, from the hand of an Italian sculptor. St. Rose is represented at the point of death, while an angel descends with outspread wings to uncover her face. By her side lies the branch of a broken rose-tree, on which one white rose hangs drooping; "the maiden and the flower giving forth, the one her pure spirit, the other its latest perfume."

2. Unlike St. Rose, the illustrious women whose names stand last on our list of heroines were missionaries in the true sense of

the word. Hélène Boullé, the child-wife of Samuel de Champlain, preceded them on the scene of that active heroism so frequent among the women of their race, and so much needed in New France. From 1620 to 1624, Hélène de Champlain labored, under the guidance of her noble husband, to teach and tame the children of the various Indian tribes that flocked to the infant colony of Quebec. She learned their languages, opened a school for them within the little fort constructed in the Lower Town, taught them the elements of the Christian doctrine, and displayed all the industries of the most active Christian charity on the very spot to be twenty years later occupied by the first Ursuline residence and seminary. Beautiful beyond most women, and good as she was beautiful, the young bride seemed to have been providentially sent to these wild children of the forest to impress them with the most exalted notion of Christian womanhood.

Not till August, 1639, four years after the death of the founder of Quebec, did the colonists see one of his dearest wishes fulfilled in the arrival of Mother Mary of the Incarnation and her Ursulines. With her was Marie Madeleine de la Peltrie, a noble Norman lady, who, unshackled by monastic obligations, came to devote her fortune and her life to the same holy cause. A marvelous story is that of these joint foundresses of that great conventual school to which Quebec and all British North America are so deeply indebted. Marie Guyart (better known by her monastic name of Mother Mary of the Incarnation) was born in the city of Tours, in 1600. Marie Madeleine de Chauvigny was a native of Normandy, and born at the Castle of Vaubougon, in 1603. Both ladies were highly educated, and felt an early inclination toward a life of religious seclusion; but both were forced by their parents to marry in their seventeenth year, and were soon widowed, — Marie Guyart in her nineteenth, and Madame de la Peltrie in her twenty-second year. The latter, however, was left childless, and the mistress of a great fortune; while the former was charged with an infant son and an insolvent estate.

They remained total strangers to each other till a concourse of providential circumstances brought them together shortly before

their departure for Canada. Meanwhile the annual reports (*Rélations*) published in France concerning the Canadian missions were producing a powerful impression among all classes, particularly in religious communities, where the apostolic spirit was fostered with especial care. They moved with irresistible force both the noble Norman widow in her castle, and Marie Guyart in her Ursuline monastery at Tours. Soon after becoming a member of this sisterhood, during Christmas-tide, 1631, Sister Mary of the Incarnation, as she was then called, had a dream or vision foreshadowing her future career. She found herself, so the recital runs, hurried along a dark and difficult road, away from her native country, holding by the hand an unknown lady whose face she could not see, and whom she drew after her perforce. They were urged blindly forward, they knew not whither, till they arrived on a strange coast, where a man clad in white, and of most venerable aspect, directed them with a mute gesture toward what seemed a little church-edifice on a hillside. On their way toward it, however, they found a wide and lofty portal leading to an immense monastic pile. Beyond the portal opened out a wide court paved with white marble intersected by red lines, above which the heavens extended their canopy of cloudless blue. A religious calm and stillness pervaded the whole place. Sister Mary, unmoved by its loveliness or its architectural splendor, sought only to reach the humble church she had at first dimly descried. Pressing forward in quest of it with her mysterious companion, she came to the verge of a lofty terrace, whence she beheld, far away beneath, a vast panorama of country covered with a dark veil of mist, out of which peeped a small edifice, — the church of that benighted region, as she was interiorly given to understand. Suddenly, while Mary was trying to peer through the thick-lying mist, her companion broke away from her, and was lost for some time in the gloom. "I," she continues, "who from the beginning had been directed toward that lowly church, could not rest till I reached it. I found it then to be built of beautiful marble covered with elaborate sculptures of ancient design. In the midst of the lofty portal sat enthroned the Virgin Mother holding the Divine

Babe, and contemplating with rapt look that fearful and wretched land." Not long afterward the vision was renewed; and the interior voice declared to her, "It is Canada that I have shown thee, and thither art thou called." . . . A similar attraction about the same time impelled Madame de la Peltrie toward the Canadian missions; and an interior voice bade her also prepare to go thither. After years of bitter trial to both, of unforeseen disappointments, and delays and difficulties apparently unsurmountable, the two courageous women were brought together, Mary recognizing in the Norman lady the companion of her mysterious dream; and in the beginning of May, 1639, they were sailing out of the harbor of Dieppe on the way to the land they had yearned so long to reach. With Mother Mary (as she was thenceforward styled) were three other Ursulines; with Madame de la Peltrie was a lady-companion, Charlotte Barré, destined to become in the near future one of Mother Mary's sisterhood. In their ship were also three nuns, hospitallers of Dieppe, sent to found a hospital in Quebec at the expense of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, the saintly niece of Cardinal Richelieu.

On the evening of the last day of July, just as the sun was setting, the missionary band (who had come in an open boat from the mouth of the Saguenay) were approaching the western extremity of the Island of Orleans, where it forms, with the opposite bold headland of Point Levi, the gateway to the magnificent basin of Quebec. The shores on both sides were clad with dark-green forests, beyond which lay the beautiful bay, now shining like a mirror of burnished gold, and backed by a wooded amphitheater, stretching westward to the lofty Laurentides, and flooded with the gorgeous hues of an American sunset. The travelers spent the night in a sheltered nook of the beautiful island, their pent-up feelings venting themselves in songs of rapturous praise, re-echoed by the primeval forest. With the early dawn came Gov. De Montmagny's gayly-decked barge to bear them to Quebec. As it crossed the broad portal of the bay, Mary of the Incarnation could feast her eyes on the glories of her predestined home. Yonder, half way up the steep promontory that divides the confluent waters of the St. Lawrence and

St. Charles, she beholds the spire of the little Church of Notre Dame de la Recouvrance, where she and her companions shall presently sing their Te Deum of thanksgiving, and beneath whose shadow almost shall be built their permanent abode. As she gazes at the scene through the mist of her own grateful tears and the bright haze of that lovely August morning, the thunder of cannon startles her from her revery. The barge has touched the strand: the brave and good De Montmagny, bareheaded, and with moist eyes, welcomes the missionaries with courtly grace and heartfelt compliments; and the assembled colonists strive to shout through their tears of joy. Mother Mary's foot has no sooner touched the shore than she and her companions kneel reverently, and kiss again and again the soil of the New World thus opened to their devotedness.

While the *cortége* winds up the rough pathway in the steep acclivity, Mother Mary's eyes seek for the dusky forms of Abnakis, Hurons, and Algonquins, who, with their wives and children, are interested spectators of this unwonted display. It is for their dear sakes, they have been told and feel assured, that these "daughters of sachems" have crossed the mighty deep: nay, the first Indian children seen by Mother Mary were folded in her embrace, as if her heart had long hungered for them. Not one word of their language can she speak; but there needs no interpreter to convey to these little savages and their parents the meaning of that light on her face and in her eyes: it is a love all divine; and Indian children and mothers feel it, and respond to it with looks that belie the reputed callousness or stoicism of the Indian heart and bearing. Every moment Mother Mary could steal from the courtesies of that first day, in what was once the Indian homestead of Stadacona, was employed by the good sisters and Madame de la Peltrie in feasting their eyes on the little native girls, who were given up to them to be created anew. The next day was devoted to visiting the missionary settlement of Sillery, a few miles up the river, which the Jesuits hoped to make the center of a system like the far-famed Reductions of Paraguay. There especially Mother Mary was overwhelmed with the affectionate demonstrations of the Indian catechumens; and

glowing visions of whole races regenerated, refined, elevated, and civilized, rose up before the soul of the heroic woman and her companions.

They lost not a moment in taking possession of their tempoary convent-school in the Lower Town. All too narrow and most uncomfortable as it was, Mother Mary established, so far as she might, a rigorous cloister, delivering her instructions to adults from behind the grating of her little parlor, but opening her poor home, as she had opened her heart, without let or hinderance, to the little girls, who thenceforward were called "seminarians." A knowledge of the three Indian languages — distinct in grammar as well as in pronunciation — was an indispensable condition toward success in their labor; and to acquire this the ladies applied themselves with an ardor and an industry that God could not but bless. Had he not bestowed the pentecostal gift of tongues on the first missionaries of his word? and were not these noble women the vehicles of the same truth to the hitherto disinherited peoples of this New World? Just as warriors, women, and maidens flocked from far and near to receive the bread of life from these gentle emissaries of Christ; just as these were beginning to convey in intelligible phrase the divine message to these thirsty souls, even before the end of that lovely month of August, — the small-pox broke out among the Indians both in Quebec and at Sillery. This calamity seemed to governor and colonists utterly destructive of all the hopes they had founded on the coming of both Ursulines and Hospitallers. The superstitious savage of America, even in our own day, attributes the origin of this most dreaded of all plagues to the reception of baptism: it was therefore expected that the Indians would fly in terror to their native forests, and renounce once for all every idea of embracing Christianity. Such was the issue predicted by the bravest and best among the settlers; but the result was far otherwise. Mother Mary and her associates displayed all through the autumn and the terrible Canadian winter, till the malady disappeared in February, such heroic devotedness, such miracles of a charity as tender as it was ubiquitous and untiring, that although adults and children alike were prostrated by the dreaded contagion, and many

died of it, there was no falling off in the numbers who sought Mother Mary's sweet ministrations, no decrease in the confidence and veneration with which they regarded herself and her fellow-laborers.

While her resources were taxed to the utmost to find means for completing their convent-school in the Upper Town, Madame de la Peltrie, in the spring of 1641, departed for Montreal, hoping to establish there, or in the Huron country near the Great Lakes, a missionary center accessible to the western tribes. This was a sore trial to Mother Mary: it was the temporary separation foreshadowed in her dream, the perilous attempt to penetrate, without direction from on high, the dark, unexplored regions of the interior. Madame de la Petrie returned to Quebec in the autumn of 1642, and remained ever afterward inseparable from her saintly friend. During the ensuing thirty years they labored side by side to build up in this land of their adoption, in honor of the Incarnate God and in imitation of his Blessed Mother, the spiritual edifice of Christian knowledge and piety. Their own letters furnish a graphic and trustworthy history of the wonders achieved by the little community in the interval. Many a lovely flower of Indian maidenhood bloomed in the gardens of the Ursuline Monastery, and afterward shed a heavenly fragrance on its native wilds; many an Indian matron returned to the lodges of her tribe, after having been instructed by the "Virgins" of Quebec, and became in her home a living pattern of every womanly virtue; and many a famous warrior, whose name was terrible far and wide, became meek as a lamb at the feet of Mother Mary, displaying ever afterward heroic generosity in conquering his evil self, and honoring his Christian profession by a life and death worthy of the apostolic age. It was not to be wondered at. The parlors of the substantial edifice in the Upper Town, as well as the narrow reception-room of their residence in the Lower Town, could not contain the numbers of Indian men and women who were irresistibly drawn to Mother Mary's lessons. Till within the present century the traveler was shown a venerable ash-tree near the monastery, beneath which Mother Mary was wont to assemble daily her large class of adult

men and women, explaining to them in their own language the doctrines of revealed religion, and impressing on mind and heart the beauty and rewards of Christian virtue. She had to break daily to this crowd, sometimes numbering two hundred, the bread of the body as well as that of the soul; for, with their notions of hospitality, they brooked not to be "sent away empty." How could she feed them for weeks and months in succession? Her sisters — her trusted companions in every toil and trial — affirmed that more than once, while she went round among the crowd of famished and expectant savages, the bread she distributed freely to each did not fail in quantity, and that all fared abundantly, where, in the beginning, there was scarcely enough for a few. Surely it was His work she was continuing who multiplied the loaves in the wilderness; and well might she count on His ever-present power and goodness to meet the needs of all these His little ones.

Thus through the long years of alternate joy and fear, high hope and bitter disappointment, while her convent was swept away by fire, and the incursions of the ferocious Iroquois again and again destroyed the Christian settlements, and massacred converts and missionaries, did Mother Mary toil on, exhorting herself to constant increase in holiness of life, and encouraging her growing community to rise higher and higher in abnegation and self-sacrifice. Madame de la Peltrie, a consecrated nun in all but in name, was called to her reward Nov. 18, 1671. Her saintly friend held her hand as the sisters wept and prayed around; the noble lady repeating with radiant countenance, just as the last shadows were gathering on her eyes, "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me. We shall go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxi.). Five months later, April 30, 1672, Mother Mary followed her. She bade them tell her son, then a learned Benedictine monk in France, that she carried him to heaven enshrined in her heart; addressed her little Indian seminarians, as they knelt inconsolable at her bed-side, in their own native tongue, with a tenderness and eloquence all divine; gave her last exhortation to heroic sanctity to her dear sisters in religion; and then lost the sense of sight and hearing. But she was heard to com-

mune sweetly with her crucified Lord and Judge, till the lips moved no more, and an unearthly beauty overspread the transformed features, — the faint reflected splendor of the eternal day. In the dear old monastery chapel, where the brave De Montcalm found a burial-place, Madeleine de la Peltrie and Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation repose side by side, united in life and death as they are in the veneration of the country of their adoption and that of their birth.

Mary was called by her contemporary, Bossuet, "The American Teresa." She did indeed resemble the great Carmelite, as may be seen in her vast epistolary correspondence, in more than one way: she had the same intense love of the Crucified, the same thirst for suffering, and the same consuming zeal for the divine glory; her intellectual capacity was of the same high level; she was favored by like glimpses of the unseen world; and was gifted with a practical wisdom that made her, like Teresa, the counselor of the highest and most learned in Church and State.

3. That admirable sisterhood, "The Congregation of Notre Dame," was founded at Montreal in 1659 by MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS. This genuine missionary sisterhood reckons, while these words are written, nearly eight hundred members, with upwards of sixty missions; and yet this great work was literally begun in a stable.

The foundress was a merchant's daughter, born in the city of Troyes, in 1620, schooled by early domestic trials, and voluntary labors in educating the children of the poor, for her great apostleship in Canada, and enabled, after a long series of difficulties and disappointments, to reach Montreal in 1653. Unaided by the money of the wealthy or the loving sympathy of tried associates, she persisted to fulfill, wherever she might among the Indians and the French colonists, the functions of teacher and hospitaller as well. But it was instruction, religious instruction especially, that she labored to impart to children and adults of her own sex. Conscious that her success could neither be lasting nor wide-spread, unless supported by a body of associates, she went back to France in 1658, traveling then, as she had before, without money, and trusting solely to the Divine Protection; and

returned to Canada in September, 1659, with a little band of women as heroic as herself. They forthwith established their residence, and opened a school in a wretched shed given them by Gov. De Maisonneuve, the lower part of which was used as a stable, and the upper as a dovecot. Deeply religious and large-hearted as was De Maisonneuve, he had no other place to give Marguerite, whose exalted virtues he knew and appreciated. Horses and cattle were driven out of the stable to make place for the school; and by an outside ladder Marguerite and her companions were able to creep into the loft, and house themselves there at the approach of the Canadian cold and snows. There, destitute of all the ordinary comforts of civilized life and of some of its necessaries, these tenderly-reared women lived, the stable in which they taught becoming daily more and more the great center of attraction for the French and the native population. Nothing could withstand the lessons taught in such a place, and enforced by such a life. Their own numbers increased; for the fame of their saintly conduct and great success crossed the seas, and thrilled generous souls in Paris as well as in Troyes. Marguerite, who was conscious of no fear but that of displeasing the Divine Majesty, or losing an opportunity of doing good, returned to France again and again, not to seek for pecuniary aid, — that she never would accept, — but to obtain fellow-laborers, and in this she was eminently successful. As surely as a powerful magnet draws and fixes to itself the particles of iron in a great heap of rubbish, so surely will moral heroism in a woman especially attract and bind to her everywhere the noblest of her sex.

The very numbers who sought instruction and education at the hands of Marguerite and her devoted associates compelled the citizens of Montreal to build them a large and substantial edifice. But the same Spirit who had called Mary of the Incarnation had also inspired Marguerite to seek above all the souls of the native Indians. Not content with opening her house and heart to the Indian children brought to her, she established, even in 1659, a school at the foot of Montreal Mountain for Indians exclusively, — an enterprise fraught with the greatest peril at a time when the terrible Mohawks and their allies swept the out-

lying French settlements like a whirlwind of fire. The two old towers amid the more modern constructions still point out the spot of Sister Marguerite's first "mission." There the intrepid sisters continued to be the foster-mothers of Christian Algonquin and Iroquois till the Indians were annihilated on the island and its immediate neighborhood. There, in 1732, they accompanied the remnants of the tribes to the two contiguous settlements formed for them by the Sulpicians at the mouth of the Ottawa. Indian schools were also opened by Sister Marguerite at Lachine and Pointe-aux-Trembles, the opposite extremities of the island. But she acted the part of true mother to every parochial settlement on either shore of the St. Lawrence. She cared not whether there was a house ready to receive them, or funds for their support: her sisters were sent to every spot where half a dozen families were already established. The rural districts around Quebec shared equally with those near Montreal the untold blessings conferred on young and old alike by these angels of the colony. In 1685 two sisters of Notre Dame hastened, at the call of the local pastor, to open a school at Ste. Famille, midway on the north shore of the Island of Orleans; and their deeds so won the esteem of the bishop of Quebec, that he would have others of the sisterhood at the head of a female protectorate in the capital. At the first intimation of her superior's wish, Marguerite set out in mid November, on foot, performing a long journey of two hundred miles through the snow-covered and ice-bound wilderness with a courage that astonished the most intrepid. It gives us an index to the temper of this great soul. How could these sublime women not win the admiration and reverence of all who beheld them?

As Canada grew, the number of the sisters and that of their schools kept pace with the increase, until now they not only fill with their flourishing schools the Canadian provinces, but send their devoted missionaries to the neighboring States, multiplying yearly, like the Sacred Tree of India, their dependent offshoots, without impairing the vigor of the parent-trunk, or impoverishing the vital currents of religious fervor and intellectual culture so indispensable in their calling. Their splendid academies in the

cities are equal to any in Europe or America, their teachers not inferior in culture to the most accomplished, while in town and country the daughters of Marguerite Bourgeoys still retain the primitive spirit of poverty, unaffected simplicity, and practical self-sacrifice, characteristic of their great foundress.

The private life of this wonderful woman, as is most solemnly attested by her most intimate companions, was the counterpart of that of St. Rose; a succession of uninterrupted and appalling austerities, concealed with a careful industry, and moderated only to enable her to fulfill the many arduous duties of her busy life. In her eightieth year, though wasted by such extraordinary and unceasing labors, she was still in possession of all her mental vigor. Her bodily sufferings had been for many years so intense as to draw from her at times involuntary cries of agony; still she held her place among the busiest toilers, ever cheerful and joyous; she worked as if limbs and nerves were of steel. Two years before, she forced the sisterhood to elect a superior in her place, that she might end her life in the delight of obeying others. On the last night of 1699, the mistress of novices being at death's door, Marguerite was heard to exclaim, "O my God, why dost thou not take useless me instead of one who is so serviceable to thy family here?" From that moment the dying nun recovered steadily, while Marguerite sickened, and was permitted to linger on in excruciating pain till the 12th of January, when Montreal mourned her parent, and Canada her greatest benefactress.

The lives, the heroic deeds, the saintly death, and the veneration with which the memory of Mother Mary and Sister Marguerite has ever been regarded in New France, have all been submitted to the judgment of the Roman see by the archbishops and bishops of Canada. The day, we trust, is not far distant, when the honors of canonization will set the seal of the most solemn sanction on the devout and grateful feeling with which these two apostles are revered.

Two other heroic women deserve to be named by the side of Marie Guyart and Marguerite Bourgeoys, and have been the parents of great religious families devoted to charity and education, — the one in Canada, the other in the United States. These

are Marie-Marguerite Dufrost de Lajemmerais, known as Madame d'Youville, and Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton. But as the plan of this work excludes all but the Christian women canonized by the Church, or whose claims to the honors of sanctity are admitted by its supreme authority, we are, perforce, obliged to omit the record of these two last heroines, both of them natives of America, and both deserving of the eternal gratitude of Americans.

Perhaps the day will come, when, in a future edition of HEROIC WOMEN, the author may conclude his list with these two last dear and venerable names. Meanwhile, he lays his book at the feet of the true women of America, — of Canada in particular, so inexpressibly dear to him as the home of his boyhood and youth, — with the fervent prayer that it may help to make the mothers and daughters of the present generation in every way worthy of the heroines of former days.

NOTE. — Just as the printer had concluded his work on this last chapter, the tidings reached us that the Holy Father had given his official sanction to the decree of the Congregation of Rites, formally introducing the cause of the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation before the proper ecclesiastical tribunal. Her heroic virtues while living, her reputation of sanctity after death, and the miracles performed through her intercession since the grave closed over her, will now be discussed with the thoroughness, maturity, and wise deliberation prescribed by the Church in such momentous matter.

Of course there was great rejoicing in Canada, in Quebec especially, — the "Walled City of the North," — which, though deprived of her former political supremacy, and threatened with being discrowned of her circle of fortifications, can never lose the halo of enviable glories conferred by such heroic self-sacrifice as that of Marie Guyart and Marie Madeleine de la Peltrie.

The Illustrations.

I. *Sara, the Princess.* Charles Brochart (Paris, France; b. 1829).

This is a well-chosen subject, from the easel of an artist who has taken high rank in the modern Oriental school of French painters. Brochart is especially well known as a painter of beautiful female faces. Greeks, Turks, Persians, Syrians, — all the races of the Levant, — furnish him types of his pictures. In the present subject (an original painting for the book) is depicted Sara, the Princess, the nomad queen, wife of the wealthy Abram, — the "woman fair to look upon." The repose of manner, the placid, dignified beauty of the face and form, the picturesqueness of costume, and the romantic features of the Eastern landscape background, — with its well and palm-trees, its flocks and tents, its long stretch of desert and distant boundary of mountains, — combine to make an attractive and characteristic picture. Perhaps its most marked trait is the rich and agreeable harmony of color which pervades it, producing at once a very pleasing effect and a singularly truthful representation of the atmospheric warmth and glow of the land of the palm.

II. *Agar and Ismaël.* Christian Koehler (Werben, Germany; b. 1809; d. 1861).

This picture is strong and expressive, rather than attractive. The depth of the greenish-blue sky and the barrenness of the indicated landscape give an intensity to the conception of the desolate mother, clasping passionately her sturdy and unconscious little outcast son. It is indeed, a striking pendant to the picture of

Sara, the Princess; for Agar, the Slave, is the embodiment of all that is despairing and forlorn. Koehler, the artist, is prominent among the painters of the Düsseldorf school, which during the past fifty years has filled a large place in the history of European art. That little town at the junction of the Düssel and the Rhine, although important as a center of railway and river traffic, has gained its chief name as the birthplace of the artist Cornelius and the poet Heine, and as the seat of one of the most eminent of German art-schools. The original painting of the present subject is now in the Civic Gallery of Düsseldorf. It was painted in 1843.

III. *Rebecca, the Bride.* Charles Landelle (Laval, France; b. 1815).

This is another of those charming subjects which the enterprise and graceful art of the French have brought from the Orient. Landelle, from whom several of our illustrations have been taken, has always been especially successful in his treatment of Eastern scenes, having spent years in his studies around the farther shores of the Mediterranean Sea, both in Syria and Africa. The original painting at present under consideration is entitled "Femme Fellah," and represents one of the young women of the Nubian tribe of Fellahs, resting at the well before taking upon her head the earthen water-pot which she has just filled. The costume is rich and appropriate, while the lovely face and figure may well be used to illustrate the maidenly grace of "Rebecca at the Fountain."

IV. *Lia and Rachel.* Jean François Portaëls (Vilvorde, Belgium; b. 1820).

Like others of the Belgian artists, Portaëls found in Paris a more brilliant and successful patronage than his own little country could afford, though Belgium boasts of some very choice collections of art. Portaëls is not a remarkably original genius; but his pictures always show thought and care. In the Bible story, Lia the "tender-eyed" became the wife of Jacob seven years before he attained the hand of his chosen love, Rachel the "beautiful." The fruitful motherhood of Lia is suggested by the merry boy climbing over her shoulders, while Rachel's gentle face shows the sadness which afterwards became almost an agony of grief, and found utterance in her supplication, "Give me children, or I die." The grouping is natural, simple, and effective.

V. *Debbora, the Prophetess.* CHARLES LANDELLE (Laval, France; b. 1815).

This is from a painting of Velleda, the great prophetess of the Druids of ancient Gaul, and is admirably adapted to represent the splendid vigor and earnestness of the Prophetess of Israel. The background of the original painting shows the gloomy, murky depths of a cavern, while the sacrificial flame burns on an altar of hewn rock. These accessories have been somewhat modified; and a wholesomer atmosphere of sunlight and verdure are given, to better suggest the *locale* of the Syrian land. But the grand form, the noble face, and the inspired attitude, of the original figure, have been scrupulously retained, as true indications of the prophetic fire.

VI. *Jephthe's Daughter.* HUGUES MERLE (St. Marcelin, France).

Whatever may have been the desolate fate to which the daughter of the stern Jewish chieftain was devoted, there can be no doubt of the sweetness, the gentleness, and the heroic fidelity of her filial love. The tender beauty of the maiden represented in the illustration is admirably expressive of the character. The face is earnest, and shaded by a certain sadness in the eyes, while yet there is no mark of rebellion or discontent at the rash vow, the fulfillment of which she has gone with her companions into the mountains to bewail. This is an adaptation from one of Merle's most beautiful pictures. He has always been especially noted for his success in depicting children and young girls; and in the present instance he has certainly obtained a very charming effect.

VII. *The Mother of Samuel.* CHARLES BROCHART (Paris, France; b. 1829).

This is a subject painted for the book. The Praying Mother, who, in the depths of her intense desire for children, had promised to devote to the Lord the man-child for which she pleaded, brought her little son Samuel, — "asked of God," — when about three years of age, and left him in the Temple, consecrated for a lifetime to the service of Jehovah. The pious, devotional spirit of the woman appears in the quiet face and reverent eyes, and the expression of happy gratitude and contentment, although she has come to yield up for ever the child of her prayers and vows. The little fellow, whom she tenderly holds to her breast, has a clear-eyed, intelligent, interesting face; and the beholder instinctively

feels that he is a child of no ordinary qualities, and one not unlikely to hear the mysterious voice calling him to the high and holy duties of his after-life. The last and greatest of the judges, and one of the most favored of the prophets of that wonderful Jewish line, was sent to the world through a beautiful childhood. The faces of both mother and boy are full of appropriate feeling, while the chaste and simple accessories enrich without overloading the picture.

VIII. *Ruth.* Louis Devedeux (Paris, France; b. 1845).

The author of this fancy of the gentle and faithful Moabite (a picture painted for this volume) is one of the rising young painters of France, having already taken several medals under the severe critical awards of the Parisian annual "Salon des Beaux Arts." The grace and modesty of both face and figure in this picture of Ruth are enhanced by the delicacy of the color, which is rich, but so quiet in tone that it is not in the slightest degree obtrusive. The costume is simple, but effective; the grace with which the fine, fair drapery is thrown over the head, and around the neck and shoulders, charmingly enhances the maidenly action of the entire figure. There is one pretty touch of nature, to which a French or Italian or Oriental artist with an observing eye would almost irresistibly be led, though an English or American painter would never think of it, — the brilliant eyes of the poppy shining out from amid the grain. This is one of the most beautiful features of the grain-fields of warm countries, and it is used in this picture with admirable effect.

IX. *The Witch of Endor.* Charles Brochart (Paris, France; b. 1829).

Contrary to the traditional conception of the woman who "had a familiar spirit," by which she is generally represented as a hideous old hag, more frightful to look upon than the ghosts she summoned from the other world, Brochart has here taken a bold departure, and given this witch some semblance of *witchery*, by making her young, beautiful, and intelligent. The picture presents her as herself terrified by the apparition she evoked, which was a spirit of loftier mien than those she had been accustomed to traffic with. The self-confidence customary with such people has disappeared; and we see only the startled woman, who, having arrayed herself for the artifices of her calling, has found her spells more potent than she expected, and, crying with a loud voice,

starts back in affright from the dread shade of the prophet-judge, and from Saul the king, the enemy and persecutor of all of her evil profession, thus suddenly revealed to her.

X. *Abigail.* CHARLES BROCHART (Paris, France; b. 1829).

The noble and generous nature which impelled Abigail to withstand the brutal fury of her husband, and even in that age of violence to dare disobedience to his wicked commands, is admirably portrayed in this attractive picture. The woman who was beautiful enough, and rich enough in womanly virtues, to win the heart of David, — the warrior, singer, poet, king, the most brilliant man of his day, and the one who has left a more potent influence upon the ages than any other of his nation (save his "greater Son"), — must have been possessed of rarely attractive qualities. The subject has given the artist opportunity to make a fine and striking picture, in which he has perhaps given prominence rather to the hospitable impulses of Abigail in her offering of provision and refreshment to the famished soldier-band.

XI. *Jezabel.* CHARLES BROCHART (Paris, France; b. 1829).

The crafty, cruel, heathen queen, who with her wiles and her superior spirit for so many years ruled Achab the king, and sucked the blood of Israel, is a subject easy to misconceive. Perhaps the first impression of such a character would suggest a large, masculine frame, with great physical power. But a closer study of history and of nature will show how much more probable is the conception of the artist, — a slender, compact body, with small but graceful arms, firm but beautifully-shaped hands; eyes to flash hatred, or beam calculating kindness; a mouth capable of the compression of cruel will, or the more dangerous smile of craft; a dress elegant in material, lustrous in jewels and costly fabrics, and exquisite in the faultless harmony of its color and arrangement. Jezabel was of the *Vivien* order of women, who are wicked, not because of temptation, but from simple love of wickedness. They seem to come upon the earth originally inspired by the Spirit of Evil, their chief joy being to exercise their intelligence and power in utter badness.

XII. *The Little Maid of Israel.* CHARLES LANDELLE (Laval, France; b. 1815).

There is, perhaps, nothing of special note in this charming and graceful picture of Landelle's. It is one of his favorite subjects of the

Oriental type, the original being called "A Young Girl of Tangiers." The little maid of the captive Israelites was evidently one who had made herself respected and liked; for when she suggested that Naaman — the greatest lord of the Syrian court, and chief of its armies — should go to seek out a prophet of her despised and despoiled countrymen, her advice was acted upon. The picture shows a beautiful, gentle face, a graceful form, and a thoroughly Eastern type of person and costume.

XIII. *Judith.* HORACE VERNET (France; b. 1789; d. 1863).

This artist (whose full name was Emile Jean Horace) was born of a race of artists; his fathers for four generations having attained eminence as painters, while he himself led a life of almost unvarying success, and died, the recognized head of his profession. His early army life gave him a marked advantage in knowledge and the attainment of a brilliant realism in his military pictures; which, as the glory of France was his chief inspiration, were for many years almost his only works. During the reign of Louis Philippe he was commissioned to paint for one of the grand halls of the Royal Palace at Versailles a series of pictures celebrating the French military successes in Algeria; a task which led him to make several journeys to Northern Africa and to Palestine, for the correct study of facial types, scenery, costume, &c. This was the most fertile period of his life, and produced, among other things, a notable series of scriptural subjects; one of which — Judith and Holofernes — furnishes the illustration of that subject in this volume. Artists have always been fond of this strong subject; but none have so well succeeded in rendering the beauty of the intrepid Jewess, combined with her resolution and force of character. The horror of the old woman who holds the dreadful basket to receive the head is finely contrasted with the superb sternness of Judith's face and action; just as the illuminated, gorgeous tapestry of the tyrant's tent is rebuked by the quiet sky and the steady shining of the stars. It is a grand composition, graphic in design, perfect in detail, effective in coloring. No wonder it has become famous.

XIV. *Queen Esther.* GUSTAVE RODOLPHE CLARENCE BOULANGER (Paris, France; b. 1824).

Of all the Orientalists of the modern French school, Gérome is probably the most brilliant and renowned. Next to him, and indeed almost his equal, is Boulanger, who has several times accompanied his famous *confrère* to the East, where they refill

their portfolios with new faces and costumes and scenes, to be wrought up into new pictures. Having just returned from one of these trips, Mons. Boulanger was fortunately able promptly to respond to the demand for two original designs for the present work. Queen Esther is one of these. The proud and serene beauty of the face, the dignity of the form and bearing, and the simple richness and elegance of the costume, make this a notable picture. The calm brow, steady eyes, and "level-fronting eyelids," together with the somewhat lofty poise of the head, show the conscious strength of the brave woman who took her own life in her hand when facing an Oriental despot in behalf of her enslaved countrymen. The pearl-tipped golden coronet, the rich details of the costume, the grace of the hands, and the regular beauty of the face, convey a sense of the woman's weapons, — the queen's power over her lord. Although the background is devoid of almost every thing save the somber shadow which gives relief to the figure, the imagination easily supplies the haughty king, the throng of courtiers, and the crowd of suppliant Jews behind their queen.

XV. *The Visitation.* Domenico Ghirlandaio (Florence, Italy; b. 1451; d. 1495).

The exquisite painting from which this subject is taken is one of the most characteristic productions of its author. The master of Michel Angelo, this jeweler's son has a double claim to the honors of art. His full name was Domenico di Tommaso Curradi di Doffo Bigordi; and his sobriquet "Ghirlandaio" was probably taken from his father's trade (and his own), — silver garland-maker. He showed at an early age a remarkable talent for painting; and, after due study, was engaged in most important ecclesiastical work in Rome, but later, and more notably, in Florence, his native city, which still holds precious memorials of his art in frescos, altar-pieces, and other paintings. He was especially successful in frescos, and has the reputation of having created aërial perspective. His works show rare beauty of design, great delicacy and sweetness of color. The present subject is especially fine in the expressiveness of the heads, and the grace of drapery and grouping. It was painted on panels, as an altar-piece for the Church of Sta. Maria Madalena dei Pazzi, in Florence, and is called "The Visitation of 1491." It is at present in the Louvre in Paris.

XVI. *The Sistine Madonna.* Raphael Sanzio (Urbino, Italy; b. 1483; d. 1520).

There can be no doubt that the Sistine Madonna of Raphael is the grandest picture in the world. The artist was one of those few happy men, who, gifted alike with genius, energy, perseverance, and an amiable disposition, enter early on their life-work, achieve instant success, and pursue a continuous ascending grade of wealth and honor until death. His works range from the simplest portraits to the most elaborate compositions, — from easel-paintings to vast architectural plans and decorations, frescos, cartoons, altar-pieces: the variety is marvelous, the execution of the highest excellence. To crown all, his private character was very noble. Mrs. Jameson says, "We may reflect with pleasure that nothing rests on surer evidence than the admirable qualities of Raphael; that no earthly renown was ever so unsullied by reproach, so justified by merit, so confirmed by concurrent opinion, so established by time."

Of his great paintings, his last — the Transfiguration, now in the Vatican Gallery — is by many regarded as the grandest; but, on the whole, the palm is given by most to this wondrous-eyed Madonna, with her babe, so supernatural, and yet so very human, in her arms. The picture was painted for the Convent of St. Sixtus at Piacenza, whence its name. To quote again that admirable authority, Mrs. Jameson: "It represents the Virgin standing in a majestic attitude, the infant Saviour enthroned in her arms, and around her head a glory of innumerable cherubs melting into light. Kneeling before her, we see on one side St. Sixtus, on the other Santa Barbara; and beneath her feet two heavenly cherubs gaze up in adoration. In execution as in design this is probably the most perfect picture in the world. It is painted throughout by Raphael's own hand; and as no sketch or study of any part of it was ever known to exist, and as the execution must have been, from the thinness and delicacy of the color, wonderfully rapid, it is supposed that he painted it at once upon the canvas, — a *creation* rather than a picture." It is a vast canvas, and by its very size is impressive: the surrounding angel heads, and figures of St. Sixtus and Santa Barbara have been omitted from this reproduction. But it is, after all, not so much the grandeur of the figures, the symmetry and grace of the composition and grouping, the bright beauty of the cherub faces, or the masterly skill of color that impress the beholder, though all these are admirable: it is, above all things, the wonderful expression of the two faces, the Mother and Child. "And Mary kept these things, and

pondered them in her heart." It is a thoughtful face, happy, and yet "pondering" the strange things that had come upon her. For the Child's face, it is a perpetual miracle: it is indeed a babe, and yet there is in the eyes a far-seeing look, and on the face an expression of such deep wisdom, combined with infantile simplicity, that it affords a never-ending study. The present reproduction is but a meager suggestion of this great work. Fortunately, through some fine engravings (notably Steinla's, by all odds the best), the picture is in general form and intent tolerably familiar. The original painting hangs in the Dresden Gallery.

XVII. *The Woman of Samaria.* Emil Vernet-Lecomte (Paris, France; b. 1821).

This is one of the admirable Eastern subjects of the modern French school, and has been deemed a singularly apposite illustration of the woman at the well to whom the Saviour talked. The easy poise of the figure, the steadiness of the head and right hand, and the strength of the face, indicate the self-reliance and confidence of a woman who has seen much of life; while the listless forgetfulness of the left hand, holding the water-jar, and the earnest gaze of the eyes, show the awakened mind and fixed attention of the listener. Vernet-Lecomte has been one of the most enterprising and successful of the French Orientalists: his pictures always glow with the warmth and color of the East.

XVIII. *Martha and Mary.* Gustave Rudolph Clarence Boulanger (Paris, France; b. 1824).

Thoroughly effective and original, the hand of a master is to be seen in every line. The artist, who was a pupil of Paul Delaroche, carried off, at the age of twenty-five, the Grand Prize of Rome, the ambition of every art-student in the French and Italian schools. His grand earlier successes were in the classical field; but of late years he has (as already remarked) devoted himself more particularly to the Orient; and Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the Levant in general, have been illustrated by his glowing pencil. In this picture the dark beauty and spirited action of Martha, the serene repose of Mary's figure, and the sweetness of her face, and her quietude of manner under the fiery reproaches of her elder sister, the characteristic contrast of color in the dresses of the two, the suggested coolness of the vine-embowered porch, and the general harmony of line, design, and color, are well worthy of observation. The fact that it was designed and

painted for this series by the great Orientalist gives to the picture an additional value and interest.

XIX. *The Widow's Mite.* Édouard Dubufe (Paris, France; b. 1819).

This painter has achieved for himself a splendid record. His first studies were made with his father, Claude Marie Dubufe, who had attained eminence as a portrait-painter (b. 1790; d. 1864); but later he had the great advantage of tuition by Delaroche, the acknowledged master of the French school of thirty years ago. He began exhibiting his pictures in the annual "Salon des Beaux Arts" at the age of twenty-one (obtaining a medal), and shortly afterwards gave his attention to subjects of religious sentiment. But after five years of this, successful as he was, he turned his talents into the channel where his father had become famous; and has given France a most admirable series of portraits of her public men and women, — renowned in the arts, in war, in politics, in society. During this period, however, he has not lost sight of imaginative art, but has made his name known throughout the world by such works as the Prodigal Son, and the picture here reproduced, the Widow's Mite. This group, without doubt, is from the life: it bears all the marks of reality, without, however, any of the hard, unsympathetic treatment of realism. The thoughtful and rather sad face of the poor woman, beautiful with the gentle joy of helping others poorer than herself; the unconscious babe asleep on her shoulder; the bright blonde beauty of the little girl, who with cheerful look watches the last penny of her mother's little store — "all her living" — as it drops into the treasury-coffer; and the half-roguish, half-shy little boy standing close under the protecting hand of his elder sister, — these form a group rarely surpassed in grace or interest. The color is managed with especial skill, the mother's somber robes being well contrasted with the brighter tints of the children's clothing, though all are evidently worn and old. The gleam of brilliant effect from the tumbled red cap in the little fellow's hand is a marvel of cleverness; and the general management of the light, softly illumining what would otherwise be a rather cold and chilly picture, is most admirable.

XX. *Lydia the Hospitable.* Charles Brochart (Paris, France; b. 1829).

From among the women of the Apostolic Church treated of in the text, it was necessary to select some prominent character.

Probably no other, save perhaps Dorcas, the typical figure of charitable industry, stands forth so distinctly as Lydia. A woman of Greek nationality, yet rescued from the sensuous habits of her race and time by the influence of Christianity and its strenuous spiritual and moral teaching as enforced by the Apostle Paul, Lydia appears chiefly as a clear-headed, generous-hearted woman of wealth, who, embracing the new religion with earnestness, was happy in throwing open her house for the entertainment of its wandering apostles, — they leaving home and kindred to "endure hardship as good soldiers" among strangers and foreigners, for the cause they so nobly served; she welcoming them with cheerful hospitality to her home, and giving them efficient aid in their work. The illustration aims only to set forth this idea: its intrinsic beauty of color and design are too obvious to need pointing out.

XXI. *Saint Agnes.* Cristofano Allori (Florence, Italy; b. 1521; d. 1568).

Perhaps the most marked feature of Allori's works is to be found in the rich effect produced by his favorite uses of yellows, reds, and greens, which gave him the name of Il Bronzino. He was a favorite painter of Florence, where his works (though rare) are still to be seen in the churches, convents, and palaces, especially that of the Medici. The work by which he is best known is his great painting of Judith with the Head of Holofernes, in the gallery of the Pitti Palace, — one which will bear comparison with Vernet's grand picture of the same subject, reproduced in this series (No. XIII.) The present charming little picture was painted with most affectionate care. The exquisite delicacy of the features; the gentle, maidenly expression of face and posture; the quiet firmness of the well-poised head; the unobtrusive touches of dress and ornament, showing the noble social rank of the fair girl; the confiding restfulness of the lamb, conventional symbol of innocence; and the martyr's palm, — all go to tell the story embalmed in the legend of the heroic Agnes, worthy alike of her Roman ancestry and her Christian baptism.

XXII. *St. Monica, Mother of St. Augustine.* Artist unknown.

A fine conception this, and evidently from one who had well studied the character and career of the remarkable woman it portrays. The greatness of great men has been proverbially traced to their mothers, in many of the strongest elements of their characters; and surely the case of the brilliant and devoted St. Augustine is

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TO THE

Most Reverend John Baptist Purcell, D.D.,

ARCHBISHOP OF CINCINNATI.

Most Reverend and Revered:

It is a privilege to be permitted to dedicate this book to you, the senior prelate of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States, the patriarch bishop of the West, crowned with the love and reverence of its populations, and sure to live in the homes and hearts of the children and grandchildren of all those whose teacher and consoler you have been for half a century.

For this is the fiftieth year of your priestly labors, your Golden Jubilee, thus coinciding with the nation's joy in this its first Centennial Year. How thoroughly you have made that nation's life your own since the day you first landed on its shores, how you have shared its alternations of joy and fear, of danger and triumph, the country has not forgotten; nor is this the place to give it more than a passing mention. But it is with the marvelous growth of the West, with the promotion of every one of its dearest civil and religious interests, that your honored name must for ever remain associated.

Here in New York we have not forgotten the exquisitely beautiful chalice prepared for your use at the altar on the morning of that fiftieth anniversary, — purest gold, chosen and fashioned by the most skillful hands, and enriched with the rarest gems, both emblematic of a whole life of unwearied and unselfish devotion, adorned by the shining virtues of the priest and the pontiff. How many loving souls contributed to the purchase and adornment of this sacred cup, because they knew, when you held it up in the great Commemoration that is the center and heart of our worship, you would surely be mindful of them and theirs!

Accept this poor offering from the least of your brethren in the priesthood, with the prayer that our Great High Priest may prolong that green old age of yours, so full of mental vigor, freshness of heart, and ardent love of every high and holy pursuit, to Oct. 13, 1883, when East and West shall unite to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of your consecration as bishop of Cincinnati.

THE AUTHOR.

New York, Sept. 11, 1876.

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N.B. — A full description of the illustrations, the original paintings of which they are copies, and information concerning the artists, may be found on pp. 382–394.

no exception. The lovely, intelligent, much-enduring, indefatigable Monica — child of wealth, and consort of aristocracy — sits in no luxurious chamber, but at the window of what seems to be a monastic cell; and, with her book of religious instruction fallen upon her lap, she meditates upon what she has been reading. There is too much repose in face and figure for us to imagine that this picture refers to the earlier period of her stormful life; but it bears rather the impress of gratitude and deep peace, as though, happy in the answer to her long years of prayer, she rested, waiting to be called home.

XXIII. *St. Brigid, or Bride, of Kildare.* French artist; name unknown.

It is not necessary, even when treating of historical personages, that we should always have authentic portraits of their physical appearance in order to receive accurate conceptions of them from the pictorial art. Indeed, in the vast majority of cases of persons living before the sixteenth century, we are obliged to take the imagining of some gifted artist to help us realize the bodily presence of those whose spirits were once so powerful among men. The self-sacrificing labors of the Irish abbess, who founded so many institutions of religion and charity in an all-embracing love of those who most need love, make her name ever dear and honored in her native land and around the globe; and we like to believe that she was — as shown by this artist, foreign to her land, but at home in her faith — a woman of earnest, kindly face, of refined expression, with hands graceful and tender for ministrations to the suffering, and of a spirit eager for instruction in holy things.

XXIV. *St. Teresa of Spain.* Book of Devotion (seventeenth century; Germany).

There can be little in the outward garb of a woman devoted to self-denial and pious labors of study and of charity to attract the eye or make a picturesque subject; yet there is much that those patient and skillful artists, the monks, found wherewith to enrich the parchment pages of their devotional books, — all manner of elegant chirographic forms and curious traceries, great letters blazoned in colors and shining with gold, arabesque ornamentation of intricate and fanciful pattern, and now and then a face so tender, so gentle, so firm in faith and holy with high purpose, as to outshine by its inner light all the golden glories and splendid

color-effects of the broad, beautiful page. Such is this unpretending portraiture of a great and noble woman; and the beholder can but wonder as he gazes on the slender form and delicate features, and recalls the wondrous works effected by the sainted Teresa of Spain.

XXV. *St. Rose of Lima.* Book of Devotion (seventeenth century; Germany).

It is hard to believe, looking upon the sweet face and graceful head bent in humility while crowned with blooming roses, that the garland which the fair girl wears, in conformity with the custom among her townswomen of Lima, is studded with metal thorns that pierce her brow with intense pain. Yet such is the strange contrast which the history of this blessed maiden reveals, — one born to beauty, social station, wealth, choosing rather to suffer with the poor, the diseased, the distressed, for the sake of helping God's creatures, and, by heroic labors under dreadful suffering, attempting to render her sacrifice less unworthy her Lord, the Man of Sorrows. The picture, in connection with the graphic delineations of the text, unfolds the spirit of this gentle heroine, whose name remains a legacy of blessedness and heavenly beauty to her native land.

THE END.